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THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

VOLUME III

CHARTERIS AND WHARTON

BY E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR

THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

VOL. I

"OLD ROWLEY"

VOL. II

THE RESTORATION RAKES:
BUCKINGHAM, ROCHESTER, DORSET,
SEDLEY, ETHEREDGE, WYCHERLEY

VOL. III

CHARTERIS AND WHARTON

VOL. IV

THE HELL-FIRE CLUB:
SANDWICH, DASHWOOD,
WILKES, CHURCHILL, ETC.

VOL. V

"OLD Q" AND BARRYMORE

VOL. VI

THE REGENCY RAKES: THE REGENT,
HERTFORD, HANGER, ETC.



COLONEL FRANCISCO.

Blood¹ must a Colonel with a Lord's Counte
Be thus Amaz'd to a Scoundrel's fate!
Brought to the Bar, & sentenced from the Bench
For only Plavishing a Country Wench.
Shall Gentlemen revere no more respect?
Had their Discourses thus by Law to be check'd!

Shall they be accountable to *Sandy Harris*...
For this or other pleasure? — Will the Furies
What men are Valising would need a Council
And such Tomfoolish without remorse —
To keep up Riches — & when all is done
An unquenchable Death he cannot shun?

COLONEL CHARTERIS IN THE DOCK.

(frontispiece.)

THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

COL. CHARTERIS AND THE DUKE OF WHARTON

BY

E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR,

M.A., F.S.A.



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QUALITY COURT

1925

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NOTE

NO regular attempt has hitherto been made to write the life of Francis Charteris (or Chartres as it was usual to spell the name in the eighteenth century) simply, I imagine, because its details are too repulsive for full exposition. In this series of the Lives of the Rakes, however, he takes so obvious a place that he could not have been disregarded. I have endeavoured to adumbrate rather than actually set down the details of his monstrous and amazing career ; but I have, I hope, done so in such a way as to indicate the kind of man he was, without unduly shocking the susceptibilities of my readers. I have made use of much of the rare contemporary literature (if such it can be called) concerning him ; and have thus tried to present a portrait of a man who was, in the direction of lust and villainy, happily *sui generis*.

Of the Duke of Wharton, a life was published in two volumes in 1732, two years after his death ; and he has, besides, been dealt with in other later

NOTE

publications concerned with the social side of the eighteenth century. It did not, therefore, seem necessary to amplify unduly the present notice of his life beyond what was required to justify his presence among the Rakes, and to show the reasons for which he was termed in his own day ‘the infamous Duke.’

E. B. C.

CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	COLONEL FRANCIS CHARTERIS	<i>Page</i>
I.	INTRODUCTORY: THE MANNERS OF THE TIMES	3
II.	HIS BIRTH AND EARLIER YEARS ..	29
III.	THE MAKING OF A RAKE	51
IV.	THE FINISHED ARTICLE	72
V.	THE CAREER OF VICE	81
VI.	A LIFE OF DETERMINED PROFLIGACY	102
VII.	BROUGHT TO BOOK	124
VIII.	HIS DEATH, AND CONCLUSION ..	145
	PHILIP, DUKE OF WHARTON	
I.	"ALL THE ADVANTAGES" ..	169
II.	THE USE AND ABUSE OF LIFE ..	190
III.	HIS LAST PERVERTED YEARS ..	216

ILLUSTRATIONS

COLONEL CHARTERIS IN THE DOCK ..	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
COLONEL FRANCIS CHARTERIS	<i>to face page</i>	56
<i>THE HARLOT'S PROGRESS</i> , PLATE I.	„ „	82
GEORGE STREET IN 1751 ..	„ „ „	130
<i>THE HARLOT'S PROGRESS</i> , "ADAPTED"	„ „	160
' TO THE GLORY OF COLONEL DON FRANCISCO ' ..	„ „ „ „	164
PHILIP, DUKE OF WHARTON	.. „ „	174
PRINCE JAMES STUART „ „	224

COLONEL FRANCIS CHARTERIS

C.C.C.

A



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE MANNERS OF THE TIMES

MACAULAY in his terrific denunciation of Bertrand Barère summed up the character of his victim in a famous passage. "Barère," he said, "approached nearer than any person mentioned in history or fiction, whether man or devil, to the idea of consummate and universal depravity. In him the qualities which are the proper objects of hatred, and the qualities which are the proper objects of contempt, preserve an exquisite and absolute harmony. In almost every particular sort of wickedness he has had rivals. His sensuality was immoderate; but this was a failing common to him with many great and amiable men. There have been many men as cowardly as he, some as cruel, a few as mean, a few as impudent. There may also have been as great liars, though we never met with them or read of them. But when we put everything together, sensuality, poltroonery, baseness, effrontery, mendacity, barbarity, the result is some-

thing which in a novel we should condemn as caricature, and to which, we venture to say, no parallel can be found in history."

When Macaulay penned this tremendous invective one cannot but suppose that, vast as his knowledge and his reading were, he overlooked one name which, *mutatis mutandis*, would have proved the exception to his thesis that Barère was the most immoral (taking the word in its most extended signification) man on record. For everything with which he here accuses the Frenchman of the later eighteenth century, may be applied to an Englishman of the seventeenth and earlier part of the eighteenth century ; and in Colonel Francis Charteris we have an example of a combination of sensuality, poltroonery, meanness and falsehood as pronounced, if not as well-known, as in the case of Barère.

The popular conception of a rake, based on the lives of many notable examples of the *genus*, is of a man immoderately given over to excess in one or in various directions. He may be all for women, or all for wine, or all for gambling ; he may combine all these desires. But there is an underlying implication of good-humour, comradeship, generosity, and that sort of light easy-going temperament which often causes people to remark that a man with such attributes is no one's enemy but his own. That he too often proves very much the enemy of his confiding victims is apt to be

forgotten. The rake comes before us as rather a decorative, even delightful, fellow (male or female); and so many of his failings are underlying the more conventional conduct of us all, that we have something of a fellow feeling for him, and are prone to excuse his delinquencies—always supposing that they do not affect ourselves adversely. Meanness is not regarded as part of the rake's equipment; generosity is; courage and a kind of general benevolence of outlook are considered part and parcel of him; and if he is guilty of falsehood it is supposed to be solely in that best of all causes—the cause of a woman. That is why men like Charles II. and Rochester, and others, have always had a place in the affections if not of all their contemporaries at least in those of a good many of them, and certainly in those of later generations.

But a complete rake is something more. He is a combination not only of profligacy in all its forms but in a conception of life which regards all meanness, all cowardice, all cruelty, all lying, as justifiable so long as it conduces to his personal amusement or advantage. The rake, *par excellence*, stands as the complete negation of everything which mankind has been taught to honour and respect—two words, by the way, which are not to be found in the rakeish vocabulary. Luckily therefore the complete rake is as rare as a black swan—a black sheep would be a better phrase—and if in the larger history of the

world Macaulay could find really but one, in the person of Barère, so we in a more restricted environment can discover but a single specimen in the person of Francis Charteris.

The period in which Charteris flourished is one of those when national upheavals throw much scum to the top of Life's simmering pot ; and just as Barère was a product of the French Revolution, so Charteris may be said to have been of the English one. For although he was born during the reign of Charles II. (a quite appropriate moment so far as concerned one dominating side of his character) he can only be said properly to have begun his life of criminal excesses at the moment when William III. had been securely settled on the throne of this country. Nor was it till George II. had been king for close on a decade that Charteris ceased his disreputable life. So that it so happened that he lived in five reigns (although when he died he was not exactly an old man) ; and that sort of unrest which such changes bring in their train seems to have communicated something of itself to his wayward passionate disposition. But it would be unfair to the age to charge it with an influence on those of his characteristics which were the most repulsive ; and his meanness, his poltroonery, his astonishing impudence, and his consummate villainy, were his own and his own alone.

Yet something should be said about that age,

because it cannot but have had a bearing on some of those attributes which sullied Charteris, if not on those more notorious ones which drew down the invective of Pope and Arbuthnot and which are stigmatised in many contemporary lampoons and are recorded in those later collections of the lives and doings of the vicious and eccentric.¹

When Charteris was born Charles II. had returned from a long and weary exile to a gay life of pleasure. A young man, even one removed from direct contact with Court life, could hardly be unaffected by the moral degradation which permeated so much of the society of the day and had its source in the vitiated atmosphere of Whitehall and St. James's. The stories that were told of the gay and reckless doings of the king and his courtiers; the light and irresponsible literature which emanated from many of those courtiers' brains, or from others who imitated their licentious writings; the publications of the Curls and such-like purveyors of indecent books; the wild orgies that took place in taverns and in even less discreet centres of amusement, all had a bearing on the formation of the character of the young, and were responsible for that widely extended *aura* of dissoluteness which distinguished the period for so many years after the Restoration. It was an era of disbelief; an era of cynical disregard for

¹ See, for instance, Caulfield's *Remarkable Characters*; *The Eccentric Mirror*; and such-like publications.

everything which men are taught to hold sacred ; and this it has in common with the age of Louis XV., when under that astonishing *ancien régime* the life of the people was divided between the two extremes of dull hopeless misery and an improvident gaiety which took for its guide the Horatian *carpe diem*, and regarded nothing as essential except the procuring of perpetual pleasure.

That there must have been something hereditary in Francis Charteris which led him into such a life as his of dissoluteness and degradation will probably be agreed to by many. There is rather a tendency nowadays to put down everything to one's forbears—except success and talent. If a young man goes wrong it is held often by himself, sometimes by others, that he is the victim of some taint for which he is not responsible ; if he makes a success of life, however, it is very much his own doing. It is one of those dangerous theses which too often result in disaster ; a form of fatalism by which the young shift the responsibility of their less desirable actions on to the shoulders of the dead, and is in itself a vicious philosophy of life. A man like Charteris, however, was hardly one to trouble himself even about such an excuse, if indeed he ever thought of it—which is unlikely. In those days such recondite reasons for the daily actions of existence were not brought to the perfection they have since been ; and we can quite visualise such a rake as not seeking

extenuation but in glorying in his misdeeds and passing his time in the prosecution of his lawless pleasures unassailed by the qualms of conscience and unaffected by the criticism of the judicious.

But example and environment have undoubtedly a tremendous effect on the mind, and given a mind naturally prone to such external influences one can easily realise on what an unfortunate period Francis Charteris had fallen. For if he began his life under the *ægis* of a godless libertine period, that life was continued under one which, modified as in some respects it was, was notable for excesses and for a general and open dissoluteness which to the more tempered and discreet indulgences of our own times seem incredible.

We are accustomed to regard the period of William III. and Mary, and that of Anne, as a sort of throw-back from the heedless days of Charles and James—an earlier sort of Victorianism. But this is to judge too much by the Court barometer. There is no doubt that Kensington Palace under the 'Little Dutchman' and his pious queen, and St. James's under the fat, rather colourless lady who succeeded them on the throne, were very much more sedate and grave centres than was the Whitehall of Caroline days. The 'asthmatic skeleton' was hardly one to indulge in those ways in which the Merry Monarch had made himself notorious; and had he been, his consort was scarcely the one to have acted the complacent

part of a Catherine of Braganza. The accession of a female sovereign whose greatest excesses had never gone beyond the drinking of tea and indulgence (no doubt largely hygienic) in the chace, brought with it a further improvement in the morals of the Court. Anne was no Catherine the Great ; and if her Court was not as pure as that of the next great female sovereign who was, after many years, destined to rule over it, it was at least decent and, owing to the galaxy of great men who surrounded her, glorious.

But notwithstanding the improvement caused by such illustrious influences, much of the life of the period was anything but seemly. It is sufficient to note that the pasquinades of Tom Brown and others were issued with their unblushing indecencies full upon them ; that even the great mind of Swift could descend to filth which even the wit that informed it could not make tolerable ; that Wycherley was still a living force whose example was followed by many a less gifted writer who preserved his licentiousness without being able to emulate his satirical excellences.

It would be obviously unfair to judge the book-sellers of the period by a single example ; but when such literature as Curril published was within the reach of all, although authority did do something to stop its sale by putting the purveyor of it in the pillory, it is obvious that its effects on public morals must have been a disastrous one.

Such publications as *The Cabinet of Love*, included in Rochester's Poems but probably not emanating from Rochester at all; *Venus in the Cloister*; *The Nun in her Smock*; *The Curious Wife*, and such-like things with equally suggestive titles, obviously show the taste of many for whom Curril catered; and the fact that his name has become synonymous with a certain class of literature—"the Sin of Currillicism," it was called—indicates that the period was anything but a pure one—even if there were plenty to be found who reprehended such publications.

As that period progressed there arose the unrest which still rampant Jacobitism brought in its train. All over the country when George I. had ascended the throne there existed an under-current of discontent with the new order of things and a feeling, here carefully fostered, there breaking forth after a decade of slumber, that James Edward would be a better monarch than an imported foreign potentate, notwithstanding the fact that that potentate could claim descent from our former hereditary rulers. The more serious outbreak of 1715 (it was to have its counterpart in 1745, and both were destined to be equally unsuccessful, largely owing to the characteristics of the protagonists of these two movements) does not here concern us, as it is rather part of the historical than of the social annals of the country. But a certain aspect of these 'rebellions,' as they were

termed, have a bearing on the more intimate history of the people. I allude to the so-called Mug-house riots, which became at one time a terror to law-abiding citizens, and which threatened the peace of the metropolis and spread even beyond its purlieus.

It was a time when political clubs were as the sands of the sea, and one of these—called the Mug-House Club, because each member drank his beer (no other liquor was served) out of a mug—was wont to meet twice a week in Long Acre. From this beginning Mug-houses spread far and wide through the city, their object being that well-affected tradesmen and others should there meet and keep up the spirit of loyalty to the Protestant succession. St. John's Lane, Cheapside, Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, Tower Street and Whitechapel were centres in the east end; matched by Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Burleigh Street, and James Street, Covent Garden, in the west. There were many other meeting-places for these mug-clubs, but these were among the most notable. Such centres of loyalty were not long in attracting the attention of the innumerable Jacobites in London. These Jacobites had been successful in securing the adherence of the street mobs, always ready for a row and not much caring for its reason so long as they had an opportunity of doing damage to property not their own.

When the accession of George I. became an established fact, Prince James's adherents were ready to go to any lengths to embarrass, and if possible overturn, the new *régime*, and riots took place throughout the city, about which disorderly mobs rushed committing all sorts of excesses. The Mug-clubs thereupon volunteered to help in the preservation of peace and order, and with this intention it was almost a recognised part of their evening meetings for the members to sally forth and do battle with the rabble. One of the earliest conflicts was that on January 31st, 1715, when the birthday of the Prince of Wales was celebrated by illuminations and bonfires. A figure of Prince James was duly burned by the loyalists ; and when the mob put out the bonfires and began breaking windows the Mug-house parties sallied forth and a free fight took place, the rioters being eventually defeated. This sort of thing was repeated on any occasion when public rejoicings or notable anniversaries gave an opportunity for the two parties to engage in hostilities ; until London became a centre of an intermittent civil war, during which those who cared for peace, and did not want to have their heads broken, discreetly kept within their dwellings.

The climax came on July 16th, 1716, when the members of the Mug-house who were wont to foregather at the tavern of Mr. Read in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, made such violent demon-

strations at the open windows of their loyalty to the Protestant succession that the mob outside, urged on by the Jacobites, at last made a furious attack on the house. Those inside barricaded it as well as they could and sent for assistance to their friends at the Tavistock Mug-house. When the latter arrived they took the crowd in the rear, what time those in the house sallied forth and attacked their enemies in front, and so drove them off in disorder. The fury of the mob at this defeat was so great that for two days they waited about in the neighbourhood, vowing vengeance. At last a leader was found in one Vaughan who, inciting the already furious throng, led them against Read's house with the intention of destroying it, shouting "High Church and Ormond ! Down with the Mug-house!"—their usual cry—as they went. Read, seeing the approach of the mob and determined to defend his life and property, threw up a window and presented a blunderbuss at the ringleader, shouting that he would fire on the first man who attempted to advance. Exasperated at the threat, Vaughan, with the crowd behind him, made a rush at the house, when Read fired his weapon, and with such effect that the ringleader fell dead. Without a moment's hesitation the mob burst in the door, and would undoubtedly have made short work of the owner, had he not contrived to escape by a back way. Thereupon they threatened to demolish not only Read's residence

but the whole street ; and would have done so but for the timely arrival of the constables, followed by the military, who soon cleared the street and restored order. Read was tried for murder, but was found guilty only of manslaughter ; five of the rioters were, however, found guilty of riot and rebellion and were duly hanged at Tyburn. After this neither the Mug-houses nor the hostile mob interrupted the peace of the city ; and if the former continued their existence there was at least no further necessity for their active interference in political disputes.

But there was, or rather had been a few years earlier, another form of disorder to which the Londoner of the day was exposed. We know how in the time of Charles II. young bloods and others were wont to perambulate the streets in a state of drunkenness, intent on amatory and martial exploits. They were called, or called themselves, Hectors, and they were a terror to all and sundry.

There have always been in the past such hot-heads ready for anything. Clubs were formed for the sole purpose of their members scouring the streets and attacking the weak and defenceless of both sexes—the men being maltreated and often left unconscious ; the women too often meeting a worse fate. At the Restoration there was the ‘Mums’ Club of this character ; and the ‘Tityretus.’ Later the ‘Scourers’ and the ‘Hectors’ became a terror by night ; and woe betide the

unlucky ones who fell into their clutches. Later still the so-called ‘Nickers’ came into existence, whose curious propensity was to smash the windows of shops and private houses by showering halfpence against them. Followed the ‘Hawkabites’; and lastly the better-remembered ‘Mohocks,’ who of course took their designation from the North-American Indian tribe of that name.

In No. 324 of *The Spectator* (March 12th, 1712), Steele refers to this precious band. “I could not,” he writes, “forbear communicating to you some imperfect information of a set of men (if you will allow them a place in that species of being) who have lately erected themselves into a nocturnal fraternity, under the title of the Mohock Club, a name borrowed it seems from a sort of cannibals in India, who subsist by plundering and devouring all the nations about them . . . Agreeable to their name, the avowed design of their institution is mischief; and upon this foundation all their rules and orders are framed. An outrageous ambition of doing all possible hurt to their fellow creatures is the great cement of their assembly, and the only qualification required in the members. In order to exert this principle in its full strength and perfection they take care to drink themselves to a pitch, that is, beyond the possibility of attending to any motions of reason or humanity; then make a general sally, and attack all that are so unfortunate as to walk the streets through which they

patrol. Some are knocked down, others stabbed, others cut and carbonado'd. To put the Watch to a total rout and mortify some of those inoffensive militia is reckon'd a *coup d'éclat*. The particular talents by which these *Misanthropes* are distinguished from one another consist in the various kinds of barbarities which they execute upon their prisoners. Some are celebrated for a happy dexterity in tipping the lion upon them ; which is perform'd by squeezing the nose flat to the face, and boring out the eyes with their fingers. Others are called Dancing-Masters, and teach their scholars to cut capers by running swords through their legs ; a new invention, whether originally French I cannot tell. A third sort are the Tumblers, whose office it is to set women on their heads and commit certain indecencies, or rather barbarities, on the limbs which they expose. But these I forbear to mention, because they cannot but be very shocking to the reader. . . In this manner they carry on a war against mankind ; and, by the standing maxims of their policy, are to enter into no alliances but one, and that is offensive and defensive with all Bawdy-houses in general, of which they have declared themselves protectors and guarantees."

In a later paper Steele returns to the subject, which was indeed one that became the talk of the town, and in No. 332 of *The Spectator* further details of the unconscionable acts of these black-

guards are recorded, the writer himself relating his personal experience of their attempted ‘sweating’ assault on himself.

As may be supposed, so observant a chronicler as Gay duly notices the peculiar propensities of the Mohocks, and in his *Trivia* he has some lines which refer to another of their pranks, that of putting women in barrels and rolling them down some declivity, such as Snow Hill or Ludgate Hill and such-like places :

“ Now is the time that rakes their revels keep ;
Kindlers of riot, enemies of sleep.
His scatter’d pence the flying Nicker flings,
And with the copper shower the casement rings.
Who has not heard the Scourer’s midnight fame ?
Who has not trembled at the Mohock’s name ?
Was there a watchman took his hourly rounds
Safe from their blows or new-invented wounds ?
I pass their desp’rate deeds, and mischiefs done
Where from Snow-hill black steepy torrents run :
How matrons, hooped within the hogshead’s womb,
Were tumbled furious thence,—the rolling tomb
O’er the stones thunders, bounds from side to side :
So Regulus to save his country died.”

We have seen that Steele was once attacked by the Mohocks, and narrowly escaped being a victim of their ‘sweating’ process. Another illustrious man of letters records fearing a like fate; for Swift in his Journal to Stella remarks that: “Here is the devil and all to do with these Mohocks,” and announces that he hears they had a design

against himself, adding : “ though I believe nothing of it, I forbear walking late.” It is from the Dean, too, that we learn of an outrage committed on one of Lady Winchelsea’s servants who, having just seen somebody out of the house, was set upon before she could shut the door, and had her face cut unmercifully, besides being beaten and otherwise maltreated.

The depredations and excesses of these brutes at last came to such a pass that a Royal proclamation was issued on March 18th, 1712, attempting to suppress them. I say ‘ attempting,’ for it appears to have done little good, the Mohocks continuing “ to cut people’s faces every night.”

It seems that some of those who had not actually been waylaid began to doubt the existence of these pests, and Eustace Budgell, in No. 347 of *The Spectator*, discusses the matter in his witty flippant style. But there is no doubt about their existence, nor about the abominable treatment in all sorts of ways to which they subjected both men and women, relying on encountering people alone, and also on the fact that they themselves hunted in bands, so that they were practically always certain of success. It was not, indeed, till nearly the close of George the First’s reign that their scandalous activities ceased.

There is no doubt that the period was one of extraordinary demoralisation, and clubs of all sorts were formed to pander to the debauchery

and profaneness which was rampant. Ned Ward's well-known list of such institutions, fictitious as it is, reveals the degraded nature of many of these, and if Smollett's theory that the South Sea Bubble was responsible for the general laxity is correct, that extraordinary delusion had much beyond the financial ruin of thousands to answer for. Among the titles of the clubs mentioned by Ward we find such suggestive ones as The Lying Club; The Thieves' Club; The No-Nose Club; The Mollies' Club; and The Quacks' Club; while of yet another, The Beaus' Club, we are told that "this Finikin Society or Lady's Lap-dog Club is now kept at a certain Tavern near Covent Garden, where every afternoon the Fantastical Idols assemble themselves in a body to compare dresses, invent new fashions, talk bawdy, and drink healths to their mistresses." There were other assemblies whose doings were even less innocent, and a peculiar side of the period is exhibited not only in the very names of some of the authentic clubs, but in the personalities of those who frequented them, and the proceedings which disgraced them.

The literature of a period is always a pretty true index to that period's inclinations and morals; and much that emanated from the Press during the forty years of Charteris's dissolute activities gives us a good idea of the manners and customs of the times. When such a writer as Swift could produce some of those poems which are not exactly

indecent or obscene but absolute filth, it is not surprising that lesser scribes with more excuse, for with them it was a matter of gaining a precarious livelihood, should have been ready to write things in which obscenity, indecency and profanity struggle for mastery.

A notable example of this kind of literature, if so honourable a word may be used to describe such things as the *Curlis* of the period unblushingly printed, are those so-called *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, which John Cleland, who was worthy of better things and who produced better things, published in 1750. This date shows that the book came out rather later than the period here dealt with, and after Charteris's death ; but it was so symptomatic of much that had preceded it, and, besides, has procured a somewhat outstanding notoriety, that it may be taken as a specimen of that kind of writing with which a certain section of society debauched itself in the earlier eighteenth century.

The fact that John Cleland was the original of the Will Honeycomb of *The Spectator* indicates that the author was not exactly the libertine which readers of Fanny Hill's *Memoirs* might reasonably suppose him to have been ; but Eustace Budgell, acknowledging that he was a " fellow of good sense," adds that, " he was every day doing and saying an hundred things which he afterwards confesses with a well-bred frankness were somewhat *mal à propos* and undesigned " ; and he goes on

to describe how he once came upon Cleland in a coffee-house, giving an intimate account of the person and character of one Moll Hinton, a notorious *hetaira* of the period, and how the narrator, catching his eye, suddenly broke off into other less questionable matters.

Fanny Hill; or, The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, was sold to Griffiths the bookseller for twenty guineas. Griffiths, having by some means, probably bribery, obtained a favourable review of the work in *The Monthly Review*, is said to have cleared no less a sum than £10,000 by its sale! It affords a curious picture of the literary morality of the time that *after* the review had appeared a certain Drybutter, a bookseller, went over its pages, accentuating the questionable passages and generally bringing it down to the standard of such works as are discreetly described as *facetiae*. When the attention of the authorities was drawn to the volume the unfortunate Cleland was summoned to appear before the Privy Council to answer a charge of immoral writing. As his only excuse was one of poverty I suppose his mouth had been shut as to Drybutter's share in the publication. It is interesting to learn in this connection that Lord Granville, on hearing of the writer's poor circumstances, settled an annuity of £100 on him, on the condition that he should in future refrain from producing any books of an immoral character.

Whatever may be said as to its tendencies, *The Memoirs of Fanny Hill* at least helps to shed a vivid light on *les mœurs galantes* of London during one period of the Georgian era; another book which does so was called *The Seraglios of London*, whose title sufficiently explains its character, and includes a description of one of the most notorious of these, that kept by Mother Needham in Park Place, St. James's Street.

Mother Needham appropriately enters into any account of Francis Charteris, for there is no doubt that he made frequent use of her good offices; and the fact that both these pests are pilloried by Hogarth in the first plate of *The Harlot's Progress*, where Charteris is seen standing in a doorway with one of his panders beside him, and the old procuress is addressing a young girl fresh from the country, connects the two in a pictorial satire as they were often connected in what the lady euphemistically called her 'business.' A couple of entries in contemporary news-sheets indicate the nature of this 'business' and to what it led; for in Fog's *Weekly Journal* for May 1st, 1731, it is stated that: "The noted Mother Needham convicted (April 30th) for keeping a disorderly house in Park Place, St James's, was fined 1s., to stand twice in the Pillory—viz. once in St. James's Street over against the end of Park Place, and once in the New Palace Yard, Westminster, and to find sureties for her good behaviour

for three years." The punishment she received proved fatal to Mother Needham's further activities. We read in *The Grub Street Journal* that : " Yesterday (May 6th) the noted Mother Needham stood in the Pillory in Park Place, near St. James's Street, and was roughly handled by the populace. She was so very ill that she lay along on her face, and so evaded the law, which requires that her face should be exposed." That her illness was not feigned, as no doubt many supposed it to be, is proved by a note to the two lines in which Pope has perpetuated her in *The Dunciad*,¹ which tells us that : " She was a matron of great fame, and very religious in her way ; whose constant prayer it was that she might get enough by her profession to leave it off in time and make her peace with God. This, however, was not granted to her, as she died from the effects of her exposure in the pillory."

A brochure entitled *Mother Needham's Lament* appeared shortly after her death in 1731 ; while a poem called *The Harlot's Progress ; or, The Humours of Drury Lane*, was published by an anonymous Grub Street rhymster, with a reproduction of Hogarth's work, in 1732, shortly after the *Progress* had been completed. Other such effusions followed, such for instance as *The Lure of Venus*, issued, according to *The Daily Journal*,

¹ " To Needham's quick the voice triumphal rode
But pious Needham dropt the name of God."

Dunciad, Book I., verse 323.

on May 1st, 1733, and written by a certain Captain Breval under the *nom de guerre* of 'Joseph Gay,' whom Pope terms "empty Joseph." In addition to this a ballad-opera called *The Jew Decoy'd* was written on the same subject in 1773 but was apparently never performed; while Theophilus Cibber treated the theme in his *Ridotto Al'Fresco or Pantomime Entertainment*, a stupid and worthless production which, however, did get performed at Drury Lane.

So popular was Hogarth's treatment of a subject which appealed to all and sundry that besides being privately printed the prints were transferred, as was the fashion of the day, to fan-mounts and cups and saucers, and to almost anything which could get an increased sale by the process. Indeed it is Hogarth who, with the highest moral aims, has perpetuated so many phases of the licentiousness of the period by means of his inimitable satiric gift and technical dexterity, and in his famous expositions of such things as *The Harlot's Progress*; *The Rake's Progress*; the *Mariage à la Mode*, and the rest, has caught the very essence of those less seemly phases of contemporary life and has converted them into pictorial tracts wherein, if the fleeting delights and glamour of vice are portrayed, there is still more markedly exhibited the degradation and misery which follow.

It is in this that Hogarth's work, coarse as it so often is or seems to us to be, is differentiated

from much contemporary literature. Always did he keep one dominant object before his eyes—the making of vice distasteful by showing the unfortunate results of indulgence. The Harlot ends miserably, with two quacks disputing over her moribund body, which lies in its coffin (in plate 6), with a disreputable Fleet parson and a notorious procuress (her name was Bentley) drinking with a circle of harlots who regard the corpse with a mixture of curiosity and indecent ribaldry ; the rake, after all his splendour and his dissolute courses, has come to this : to be a show at Bedlam where curious ladies come to watch the ravings of his madness. In the *Mariage à la Mode* an ill-assorted *mariage de convenience*, followed by adultery and murder, closes with the heroine dying among strangers and pilferers with only her child trying to catch recognition from her senseless eyes. In *Industry and Idleness* ; in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, it is the same : the inevitable moral that is to be drawn from immorality ; the end which comes, so hideously caparisoned, to lust and profligacy ; when, as Beaudelaire has put it, the clock strikes the inevitable hour and—it is too late !

We are sometimes accustomed, nowadays, to gloss over such things in an easy way by accounting for them on the score of the times being what are termed full-blooded, not squeamish, and so forth. But be this as it may, when such things are rife the morals of a people are in a bad way. It is

worse than no excuse to say, as one sometimes hears it said, that open vice is better than vice concealed. As a matter of fact it is, so far as the morals of the citizen at large are concerned, very much worse. Familiarity with such things causes in time these things to seem negligible and ordinary, and when vice is openly conveyed from one section of society to another it is doubly harmful.

It was, then, in such an atmosphere that Francis Charteris grew to manhood. With undoubted predilections towards impurity he found little around him likely to curb his propensities. He found on the other hand that seduction was a recognised attribute of the fine gentleman ; that honour was greatly at a discount ; that gain was, as the South Sea mania undisputedly showed him, the one end and aim of life ; a disbelief in every man's word and in every woman's virtue followed as a matter of course. Charteris in these respects was a true child of his period, and was not largely differentiated from many men who, possessing such ideas, yet in other ways did not prove altogether bad citizens. What did place him in a niche by himself was his amazing effrontery, his inordinate mendacity, and his meanness. These were his own inalienable attributes, and it is they, in conjunction with so many other failings, that place him apart in the annals of the rakes of his times. I began this chapter by quoting

Macaulay's fulminating words on Barère; I may fitly close it by the remark that if a companion picture to that of Barère were required it would be found in the mental lineaments of Francis Charteris.



CHAPTER II

HIS BIRTH AND EARLIER YEARS

THE family of Charteris is an old one. It is connected with those of Wemyss and Douglas, the head of it being the Earl of Wemyss and March, whose principal seat is Gosford House near Longniddry in Haddingtonshire. Francis Charteris became connected with this illustrious stock, as we shall see, by the marriage of his only legitimate daughter with the 5th Earl; so that he really only had an indirect association with the family whose name, if it were capable of disgrace, he would have disgraced, but to whose then head, his grandson, afterwards 7th Earl of Wemyss, he left the bulk of his fortune.

His father, who possessed an estate called Amisfield in Dumfriesshire, which is said to have been in that branch of the Charteris family for four hundred years, was, we are told, "related to some of the first families in the north, by intermarriage with the nobility," although his stock was of sufficiently ancient origin in itself to give as

well as to receive *kudos* from such alliances. This father, John Charteris, a man of integrity and standing who frequently acted as Magistrate in Edinburgh, was indeed the son of Sir John Charteris of Amisfield, or Amesfield as it is sometimes spelt.

I may here parenthetically remark that on the death of an uncle, Francis Charteris, his father having by then also died, became the chief male representative of this branch of the family, although the actual estate passed into the possession of his cousin Elizabeth, the sole heiress of the uncle referred to. Subsequently (to anticipate matters) she married one of the Hogg's, and her son Thomas Hogg assumed the name of Charteris, and thus became the ancestor of the Amisfield family of that name. As I have said, this estate was in Dumfriesshire, but the fact that Francis Charteris gave the same designation to a property originally called Newmills (and often afterwards spoken of by this title), which he purchased later, has caused some of his biographers (if they can be dignified by such a title) to confound the two and to state that he was born on his father's property in this place.

Francis Charteris was born at Edinburgh ; but the actual date of his birth is a subject of much confusion, and that it was so during his lifetime and immediately after his death is proved by the varying dates given in the many lives and squibs which appeared at the time of his trial in 1730,

and also after his decease in 1732. Thus we are told in *Some Authentick Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Ch—s*, published in the former year, that "he first drew breath in 1664"; others, as well as the inscription on a mezzotint portrait of him as he appeared at the Old Bailey, give the date as 1666. But as most of these authorities, with that airy disregard for accuracy which is so prevalent in their effusions, concur in saying that at his death in 1732 (of which there is no doubt) he was 57, it would give his birth as having taken place in 1675, the date perpetuated in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The statement in *The Eccentric Mirror* that he died in 1731 aged 63 is obviously incorrect. Nor can much reliance be placed on the other statements. Swift, however, in his *Excellent New Ballad* on Dr. Sawbridge, speaks of Charteris being "three score and ten" when he was condemned in 1730; and in a note he is said to have died at the age of 72; while in a letter from Miss Kelly to Swift (dated 1733, and to which I shall have occasion again to refer) that lady remarks: "Who would have a father at seventy publicly tried?" I am therefore inclined, having carefully considered such evidence, and other with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader, to place Charteris's birth in the year 1660, an appropriate moment too for such a consummate rake as he to appear, as being the year which was to bring about the Restoration.

and to inaugurate the rakeish annals we are considering in this series of volumes.

Like most Scottish parents Francis's father was at pains to have the boy taught well, and although it is not on record what schools he attended, or if he was ever an undergraduate at a Scottish or English university, we know that he was given what was called a liberal education, and that if the fruits of it were not markedly prominent in his subsequent career it was no fault of his father's. According to one account, the books he chiefly understood were "*Pharoah, Basset, Ombre, Piquet*, etc., neither was he unacquainted with *Hazard*," and, as we shall see, he was to make good use of his knowledge of these card games to his own advantage, and very much to the detriment of his unwary adversaries.

One somehow visualises the father of Francis as one of those men who by methods of strictness and repression help to accentuate in their offspring a desire to cast off the paternal shackles as soon as may be, and to throw themselves into that course of investigation which is euphemistically called 'seeing life.' To paraphrase a famous line, there is little doubt that young Charteris saw it '*unsteadily and saw it whole*'; and his first step towards doing so was to enter the army. He became an ensign in a foot regiment commanded at that time by a Colonel Hodges. In this capacity he 'made the campaign,' as the saying was, in

Flanders, where the Duke of Marlborough (himself a rake, but one whose military genius has obliterated to a large extent his personal frailties) was going from conquest to conquest, and, in the verse of Addison, was riding on the whirlwind and directing the storm of a hundred engagements.

Most young men on entering the army manage to repress their vivacity, if they are endowed with that quality, and to submit themselves to an unaccustomed but inevitable discipline. Not so Charteris. He had been but a short time in Colonel Hodges' regiment when some cause of disagreement (the details of which have not survived but which from the subaltern's subsequent conduct was, it is fairly safe to believe, due to his insubordination) having arisen between Charteris and his commanding officer, the truculent, hot-headed ensign quitted the regiment. Judging from his subsequent life it seems probable that the cause of this incident was either Charteris's impudence or some more than usually outrageous example of immorality. I say 'more than usually,' for in those days, especially during foreign service, the general immorality of the subalterns did not greatly concern a commanding officer, and so long as they fought well and did their military duty the young men of Marlborough's armies could otherwise conduct themselves very much as they pleased, their delinquencies being regarded with an unprejudiced eye by those who did very

often much the same themselves. I therefore think that some gross instance of insubordination, or an exhibition of his extraordinary impudence of manner and general behaviour, was probably the cause of the quarrel between Charteris and Colonel Hodges. Whatever the reason may have been, however, it resulted in the former either voluntarily leaving that particular regiment or being forced to do so.

That the trouble was a personal rather than a general one seems indicated by the fact that Charteris soon after joined another foot regiment, this time under the command of Colonel Brewer. Here he got on better in one way ; but not in another. He had a very high opinion of himself and imagined that promotion, whether it came from the east or from the west, from the south or from the north, should certainly have come by way of Colonel Brewer. There is no record of Charteris having done anything specially notable to ensure a step upwards ; but probably the fact that he was Francis Charteris was quite sufficient for the young man to imagine that he deserved advancement, and to make him restless and irritable when he did not secure it. Again disagreement ensued, with the result that he left Brewer's regiment as he had left Hodges', and if for a different reason, at least one which shows a phase of his character that as time went on was to be further developed.

There is a story that while quartered at Bruges he stole a piece of meat from a butcher's shop, and that the theft having been traced to him he "underwent the usual military discipline," and was summarily discharged from the army. The facts may be so; but somehow one hesitates to accept them. It was hardly like Charteris to purloin a bit of beef; had it been the butcher's daughter he had carried away, one would have received the tale as a perfectly likely one, at once indicative of his amorousness and his audacity.¹

Having for a time quitted the army, he returned to his paternal home, and there for a period remained, hardly, one imagines, to the advantage of himself or the morals of the neighbourhood, where any pretty girl might have considered herself lucky if she escaped the snares of the budding libertine. But it was not long before Charteris tired of a country life, where, if one form of amusement existed, he had little chance of exercising his other propensities, of which gaming had become a dominant one. His father, too, no doubt, not sorry to disembarrass himself of an idle fellow about his property, took steps to obtain another commission for him, with the result that he secured for him one as an ensign in the third regi-

¹ Another version places the *locale* of this story at Northampton, and says that Charteris had to pay seventy pounds fine. It is but fair to say that when in Newgate subsequently, Charteris swore to the Rev. Mr. Suthrie that there was no truth in the story.

ment of foot-guards, then commanded by Major-General Ramsay. It would appear that this regiment was then about to go on active service ; for we know that when Charteris joined it his reputation was, even then, so bad that other officers who were acquainted with his renown refused to enrol themselves in it if he was permitted to do so. Indeed so strong an opposition was aroused that he had perforce to dispose of his commission and return to Edinburgh.

About this time a certain Colonel Macgail had been sent into Scotland to raise a regiment of foot for King William, and notwithstanding his son's bad name old Mr. Charteris appears to have had sufficient interest again to secure a lieutenant's commission for " wicked Frank," as he was wont to call his ne'er-do-well offspring.

At the Peace of Ryswick (1697) Francis Charteris returned from foreign service to Edinburgh, and " having acquired a good judgment in Running-Horses, it luckily recommended him to the favour of a late noble duke¹ who was a great admirer of these diversions, and thus was perhaps a means of his being preferred to the post of exempt in the 3rd troop of Life Guards."

During his varied military career Charteris became acquainted with a number of noble and

¹ No doubt the Duke of Queensberry, who, if he was thus friendly to the young reprobate, had cause to repent it later, as we shall see.

high-born young men in it, who had introduced him, to his heart's content, to all sorts of expensive amusements in which gambling and horse-racing and other diversions formed the staple. Many young men under such circumstances would have speedily been ruined. It is the recognised part of the neophyte (although Charteris can never have been exactly that) to be the victim of the sharks who are always lying in wait for such prey. Perhaps it might have been better for his character had it been so in this instance. Stripped of his last penny, having earned wisdom by bitter experience, he might have been obliged to leave the foot-guards and, returning to Amisfield, might have settled down to a peaceful bucolic existence like his father. I say he might have done this, although with such a temperament as his so great a metamorphosis would probably have been impossible.

Be that as it may, Charteris was not of the stuff to do anything of the kind ; nor was he of those who play the part of pigeons to the rooks of experience. He became a gambler indeed, but it was he that acted the part of the voracious bird, and the pigeons were other young fools who neither possessed his knowledge nor daring and from whom he soon began to win very large sums of money—it may be by fair means, for his skill was unquestionable ; but it is quite as likely that he did not hesitate in his methods of transferring the property of others to his own pockets. The

fact is, in his incorrigible roguery the part of cheat would have but been in character. By an expert and systematic attention to cards and dice, Charteris began to lay the foundation of a large fortune. His success at play was so consistent that vast sums passed into his hands from those of the young fools of quality and fortune ; and with the accumulation of wealth began that extraordinary meanness which, allied to his profligacy in other directions, differentiates him from so many rakes, if not from any that can be recalled to memory.

It seems likely that after a time either his regiment, as the saying is, grew too hot for him, or he found that he had drained the pockets of those from whom he perpetually won, and that there was little more to be got from those who had, perhaps, become wary by experience. Knowing, as we do, Charteris's character for hot-headedness, and his readiness to bully and treat his superiors with disrespect, there may have been other reasons for his transferring his activities to other quarters. Whatever the reason may have been, however, we find him now a cornet in a dragoon regiment ; and here he continued those gambling propensities which had already gained him an unenviable notoriety in certain centres.

“ Being a most expert gamester,” we are told, “ and of a disposition uncommonly avaricious, he made his knowledge of gambling subservient to

his love of money ; and while the army was in winter quarters he stripped many of the officers of all their property by his skill at cards and dice.” From the same source we gain a glimpse at the methods Charteris employed to reinforce, to his own advantage, his opponents in order that he might have renewed means of despoiling them. “ He was, however, as knavish as dexterous ; for when he had defrauded a brother officer of his money, he would lend him a sum at the moderate interest of an hundred per cent., and take an assignment of his commission as a security for the payment of the debt.”

It is, of course, obvious that this sort of thing could not be permitted to go on indefinitely without attracting the notice of the senior officers of the regiment. A consistent system of depredation rouses suspicion, and if a gambler’s luck is phenomenal there are always those who from wondering at it begin to examine its causes more curiously—with the result that something more than mere chance is often found to be responsible for it. This happened in the case of Charteris, and a disastrous event for him was the consequence.

Among the younger officers in the dragoon regiment which he had joined as a cornet were two men of illustrious birth and unimpeachable character : John, 2nd Duke of Argyll, and John, the 2nd Earl of Stair. The former was afterwards

to become famous both in the field and in politics, and has come down to us as the man who was

“ . . . the State’s whole thunder born to wield,
And shake alike the Senate and the Field,”

and, in the prose masterpiece of Scott, as the friend and protector of Jeannie Deans. The Earl of Stair was to be equally notable in diplomacy and warfare, as sagacious ambassador and brilliant soldier. Argyll had been born in 1678 ; Stair in 1673, so that both these officers were very much younger than Charteris ; and at this time (about 1704) Argyll seems to have been a captain and Stair probably a major in the regiment. These two determined that the ruin, financially and otherwise, of certain irresponsible subalterns should cease if possible, and to this end applied to the Earl of Orkney, who had a command in the army then quartered at Brussels. They pointed out that if the proceedings of Charteris were not stopped there would hardly be a young man in the regiment who would not be sucked dry ; and they also revealed the wholesale disorder and demoralisation which was spreading like a disease. Lord Orkney, who was not only anxious to keep the army as pure as might be, but was also desirous that its credit in a foreign country should not get tarnished by the scandals likely to arise from such habits of dissipation and particularly from the presence of such a man as Charteris among its officers, at once represented the circum-

stances to the Duke of Marlborough, who forthwith issued orders that Colonel Francis Charteris should be put under arrest, and that he should be tried by a court-martial, there to answer the charges brought against him, as a man likely to diminish the credit of the army by his gambling and extortion and by the leading of the younger officers into all kinds of dissipation.

We can perhaps smile at the promulgation of such a command by one who had not only been a notoriously loose-liver himself but whose passion for the accumulation of money almost equalled that of Charteris. But the great Duke had already largely nullified these shortcomings by his military genius, and was in this very year to extinguish in the glory of Blenheim that passionate pursuit of the fair sex which had distinguished him as Colonel Churchill, and that avarice which was not to be subdued until he expired with “the streams of dotage” flowing from his eyes into Johnson’s verse.

The Duke’s order was promptly obeyed. A court-martial was instituted forthwith, and in order that no charge of partiality should be levelled at it, it was composed of an equal number of English and Scottish officers. After a long and patient hearing of the case for and against the culprit (although there seems little that could have been said in extenuation), the charges brought against him were so clearly proved that he was not

only sentenced to refund the various sums of money he had extorted from his victims at the most usurious interest, but was also stripped of his commission and ordered to be drummed out of the army, with all the recognised humiliations, such as the tearing off of his epaulettes and the breaking of his sword, connected with that disgraceful punishment.

In a news-letter dated August 24th, 1704, just eleven days after the victory of Blenheim (at which the egregious Charteris was *not* present) there is the following entry :

“ One Charteris, an officer in the Horse Guards, is suspended by the Duke of Argyll, captain of the said troop, for having had the impudence to place himself at the commander’s table, and when he was turned out, to draw upon the gentleman that was commanded to do it.”

There seems little doubt that the writer of the news-letter had got his facts wrong. It is certainly quite probable that Charteris did act in the way described, and his action would as certainly have been sufficient for him to be placed under arrest ; but it is more likely that the incident at the Duke’s mess merely added to the cumulative charges impending over his head on the score indicated above ; and that this latter episode, being in the nature of a dramatic one, was more freely canvassed and thus got itself embalmed in the pages of the news-sheet.

The military career of Francis Charteris had been anything but a glorious one. There is no evidence to show that he in any way distinguished himself, except in the paths of immorality and sharp practice. He was that sort of pest which was not peculiar either to the century in which he lived or the great profession which he disgraced. The occupation of victimising the youthful and the unwary has, unfortunately, been common to all callings and all ages ; and there are plenty of men who if their gentility were called in question would be almost too incredulous even to resent the imputation, but who pass their lives in a system of swindling that would disgrace the lowest strata of society. They are the sort of blackguards who prey on the unsuspecting of both sexes, who if the glibness of their lying tongues is not sufficiently effective call in to their aid the help of wine or women, and through these agencies accomplish what their own wits are unable to achieve. Too often they keep on the right side of the law, so that the misery they cause has no redress. Conscienceless ; passing through life with a high hand ; affecting to look down on honest men in a lower social station than their own ; continually boasting of their birth and the connections who have long since discarded them ; such creatures as these pass like offensive exhalations from whose noisome contact we instinctively stop our noses. They find their dupes in the young and inexperienced,

and as such should be pilloried as examples to those who would attempt to tread the same path. Most people have heard or read of men of this *genre*; some have met them; but only fools with all the inexperience of extreme youth full upon them are deceived by their bluster or their insinuating hypocrisy. This kind of man was Charteris; there are many of his kidney walking about the streets to-day.

Charteris was now a sort of human derelict. He had been drummed out of the army; he had disgraced himself in a variety of ways; and like many people in a similar position he took to living on his wits. Unfortunately his wits, of which it is not denied that he possessed a plentiful share, were never employed honestly. Like a certain famous, or notorious, man of our own day, he was naturally clever enough to have risen to a commanding position, but some evil genius caused him always to stultify his gifts and to make an ill use of his opportunities. What might have proved ability became in his hands a sort of low cunning by which he was enabled to get the better of many an unwary person, simply because he apparently cared not for the good opinion of any. There have been men of this nature who have been ready enough to despoil their equals or their superiors, but who have shown themselves not illiberal in their dealings with their inferiors. They have probably argued that those who are

in a position to protect themselves are fair game for the predator, who should draw the line between such victims and those whom nature and circumstances have prevented from adequately defending themselves. That is one reason why your rake (except in his amorous adventures—when no position is too secure or too frail to parry his assaults) has so often secured a kind of picturesque popularity. We are liable to condone the actions of the highwayman who robs my lord in his equipage at Turnham Green or Hounslow ; but we have little mercy for the same gentleman who despoils the tradesman of his hard-earned gains ; and so Captain Macheath for all his shortcomings is a popular hero, and Dick Turpin or the gentlemanly Maclean are made the protagonists of picturesque narration.

Charteris was a very different kind of plunderer. He was ready enough to relieve his equals and his superiors at cards and dice, often, it is pretty certain, faked cards and loaded dice ; but he was just as prepared to cheat an innkeeper or a servant, as a story which has been preserved will testify. After his banishment from the army at Brussels he left his regiment, which must have been only too glad to see the last of so odious a person, and made his way to Malines. It was during this journey, which he apparently made on foot and with very little money in his pocket, that Charteris concocted one of those wily deceptions by the aid

of which he not infrequently replenished his purse at the expense of the innocent and credulous.

It happened in this way. Having, as I have said, little if any money about him, for he had been made, as we have seen, to disgorge all his ill-gotten gains at cards and so forth, he began to think of various schemes for refilling his pockets ; and a characteristic one suggested itself to him. Going into a field he pulled off his breeches and concealed them under some rubbish in a neighbouring ditch.¹ Then having carefully buttoned his scarlet cloak, which hung below his knees, in order the better to hide the absence of his nether garments, which approaching darkness also helped to do, he proceeded to an inn in the neighbourhood, and demanded a lodging for the night. At that time the presence of the army in the Low Countries ensured its officers the best of treatment in any hostelry they chose to enter, and mine host showed Charteris every possible civility, putting his best room at his disposal and placing before him an excellent supper. Having done full justice to the meal and consumed as much good wine as he could, Charteris retired for the night to his chamber ; the landlord no doubt congratulating himself on the presence in his house of one who was obviously able and willing to pay well for the accommodation. He was soon to find out his mistake.

¹ One account says he put them in the fire when he had arrived at the inn—the point is immaterial.

The next morning a violent ringing of the military gentleman's bell brought up the obsequious landlord in a hurry. Entering Charteris's room he was assailed by a storm of reproach and invective, from which torrent of words he was at last able to distinguish a specific charge ; the guest told him that his breeches had been stolen during the night, and not only that but the contents of the pockets, which Charteris swore he had not emptied, had also gone. These consisted, according to his account, an account sprinkled with fearful oaths and imprecations, not only of a gold watch, a very valuable diamond ring, and other objects of less importance, but also of a considerable sum of money. Charteris, with that devilish foresight which was never lacking to him when some nefarious scheme was toward, had taken the precaution of breaking the glass of one of the windows of his bedroom, and now pointing to it he adduced it as evidence that someone must by this means have entered his chamber and abstracted all the valuables he could lay his hands on, what time Charteris himself was sleeping the sleep of the just, and, after his long journey on foot, of the exceeding weary. He went further, and by implication, if not by a direct charge, accused the astonished landlord himself of being the thief.

Mine host was beside himself with terror ; the fact that his accuser was an officer made the circumstance a very much more serious one than

had he been an ordinary traveller. Military law was stringent, and little mercy was shown to any who should treat a soldier in an unseemly manner. Charteris raved and swore that he would have mine host carted off to Brussels, where he would certainly be executed as, if not the actual robber, at least as an accessory to the theft. The landlord protested his innocence and his absolute ignorance as to how the property had disappeared or who had taken it. All was in vain ; Charteris was adamant. He would make a crying example of a landlord whose inn was so badly looked after that innocent strangers were liable to be robbed and probably murdered in their beds.

In his dreadful dilemma the landlord at first did not know what to do. At length a ray of hope illumined his despair. He was acquainted with some friars who occupied a monastery in the neighbourhood ; and to them he rushed off for counsel and, if possible, assistance. He had already learned from Charteris the value he placed on the *stolen* articles and the sum of money which had disappeared with them. Having put his case to the benevolent friars and having expressed himself willing to do anything—except go to Brussels and be executed for something of which he was absolutely innocent—he suggested that if they would advance him the amount which would satisfy the furious stranger, he would gradually repay it. Moved by his tale and although no doubt

satisfied as to his innocence, at least recognising that it would be difficult to establish either it or the fact that he had not in some way been guilty of negligence in not seeing that his inn was burglar-proof, they agreed to lend him the money (the sum Charteris demanded was £40) there and then. So, returning with it, he handed it to Charteris with manifold expressions of regret and reiterations of personal innocence ; and the egregious impostor pocketed it, grumbling and fuming the while ; and soon after took his departure.

This anecdote forms a good example of the lengths to which Charteris was ready to go to obtain his nefarious ends. The reader will agree that hardly a meaner form of swindling could be resorted to ; he will have occasion later on, however, to realise that in monetary matters Charteris was capable of something even meaner, the incident of the inn at Malines being but a mere episode in the gamut of his misdoings.

After having perpetrated this outrage on the unoffending innkeeper of Malines, Charteris, with the considerable sum of money he had thus obtained, continued his journey northwards. There is no record of his having repeated his swindle anywhere else on his route, although one may be quite sure that if he found himself short of funds he would have been quite ready to have done so, or to have indulged in some equally dishonest and ingenious method of supplying his deficiencies. For, as I

have said, he possessed so much low cunning and resource, coupled with such a total disregard for the feelings or opinions of others, that into whatever straits we may imagine him running, monetary straits would have been, at any rate for long, the least of them.

In due course he arrived in Holland, and making for the coast he embarked on a ship bound for Scotland. Apparently he reached his native land without further adventures, and once again appeared, a stormy petrel indeed, at the paternal abode at Amisfield. News travelled slowly in those days, and, besides, the reports of great events abroad were likely to swamp the story of Charteris's military disgrace; so that with his insinuating and lying tongue it is probable that he came back to his own people as a sort of hero, reflecting a glory of which he had never really partaken.



CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF A RAKE

THUS, then, we find Charteris back in Scotland. That country was then in the throes of the agitation which eventually led to the passing of the Act of Union ; but what, if any, part Charteris took in the affair is shrouded in mystery. One supposes that he deemed it prudent for a time to lie low, as the saying is ; for we may be sure that if we do not hear of any villainy being perpetrated by him it was simply because he had sufficient acumen to know when to efface himself.

It is significant, however, that in a short time after his return from the Continent he is said to have been in possession of a considerable sum of money ; but how he obtained this is a mystery. He could hardly have done so amid the rural surroundings of Amisfield ; and it seems fairly clear, therefore, that he soon removed to Edinburgh, where, no doubt by his gambling, and chicanery in other directions, he managed to accumulate a certain amount of ready cash. The methods he had

adopted in the army he probably put in practice among the civilian population, and by a combination of successful gaming and astute usury he must have done well for himself.

Beside these characteristics he could when occasion required disguise his true character under the guise of a sort of hypocritical servility which he found suited his ends admirably. His ability in habituating himself to the requirements of all sorts of companies, and a singular aptitude for gauging character, were parts of his stock-in-trade, as they are in the case of most adventurers; and Charteris appears to have used his abilities in these directions to such good purpose that, astounding as it may seem, he actually contrived to obtain another commission in a cavalry regiment in which he was again to reach the grade of Colonel. In those days the constitution of the army was on a very different basis from that which now obtains; and had Charteris done a tithe of the things to-day which he practised in the eighteenth century, not the ranks of the army but those of the prison would have been swelled by his vicious presence. However, by dint of persuasion and "servile submission," as it is termed, backed by money, he was successful in once more becoming what has been described as an officer and a gentleman.

At this juncture his father died, and Francis Charteris stood at once on a very different footing from that which he had formerly occupied. He

became a rich man, for the property left by old John was of very considerable bulk ; and, besides, his son stepped into his shoes in that capacity of 'laird' which then gave special significance to ownership. He was, too, after all something of a personage so far as birth and position were concerned ; although it must certainly have been difficult for either his equals or his inferiors to have realised it.

Like all people avid of money, the fact that he had now much only made him anxious to have more ; the proverb that *l'appétit vient en mangeant* was peculiarly appropriate to his passions, whether their direction was in the way of women or wealth. It is therefore probable that it was with a view to adding to his possessions in both respects that he turned his thoughts to marriage. The young lady on whom he cast his eyes was Eleanor, or Helen, who is described as being of good family and fortune, and who was indeed the daughter of Sir Alexander Swinton, afterwards Lord Mersington, one of the members of the College of Justice, as it was called, in Edinburgh.

One can well understand that the married life of Mrs. Charteris was neither a quiet nor a happy one. Tied to such a reprobate as the Colonel she must have rueed the day when she consented to become his wife. What Sir Alexander thought about it does not appear. A contemporary says of the unhappy lady that she " hath scarce met

with any other comfort since her marriage than that of universal commiseration." She flits, an ineffective, sad ghost, through the subsequent career of her vicious husband, and we hear little of her except that she bore one child—the daughter, Janet, who was to marry, on September 17th, 1720, the 5th Earl of Wemyss, and thus to link up two ancient families.

There is almost as much mystery about Charteris's marriage as there is about the date of his birth. For instance, some accounts of him state that he married the daughter of Lord Pencaithland, one of the Lords of Session in Scotland, in 1702, and that in 1730 she was "living separately in Edinburgh." But the only daughter of Lord Pencaithland whom (to use an Irishism) Charteris could have married was Agnes, who was born in 1697 and would have thus been five years old at the date given. I cannot but help thinking, in the absence of actual reliable information, that he first married Miss Swinton, and that after her death he may have wedded Miss Pencaithland; although how he could have persuaded two girls to throw in their matrimonial lot with him passes comprehension.

In this connection I have discovered a very interesting passage in the letter of Miss Kelly to Swift to which I have before referred and which I interpolate here as still further complicating the story of Charteris's matrimonial adventure or

adventures. "The unhappy life of a near relation," she writes, "must give one a pain in the very repeating of it that cannot be described. For surely to be the daughter of a Colonel Chartres, must, to a rational being, give the greatest anxiety; for who would have a father at seventy publicly tried for an attempt at a rape? Such a *Dulcinea del Toboso* is shocking, I think. For if a man must do wrong he should aim a little higher than the enjoyment of a kitchen-maid that he finds obstinately virtuous. In short, dear Sir, I have been fool enough to let such things make an impression on me, which spite of good constitution, much spirits, and using a great deal of exercise, has brought me to what I am. Were I without a mother (I mean had I lost her in my infancy, and not known her goodness), I could still better have borne the steps that were taken; but whilst I saw how lavish *he* was upon his dirty wenches, I had frequent accounts that my mother was half starved abroad. She brought him sixteen thousand pounds fortune, and having borne severe usage for near twenty years, had resolution enough to part with him, and chose to take two hundred and fifty pounds per annum separate maintenance rather than bear it any longer: and as she could not live here upon such an income, she has banished herself, and lives retired in a country-town in France. His late letters to me have been kind, and hitherto he has supplied me well; but in his

last he tells me he shall not see me till September." This letter is dated from Bristol on July 8th, 1733, and is signed "Frances Arabella Kelly."¹

Now this is a most amazing letter in many ways. The writer's name is Kelly; she speaks of her mother having married Colonel Charteris with a considerable fortune; she speaks of her father, presumably Charteris, in July 1733 as having recently written to her, when it is a known fact that he died in the preceding February. Who then was Miss Kelly? Was she really a daughter of Charteris, and if so had she changed her name? Who was her mother? Was it Miss Swinton, and did she have another daughter besides the Janet who married Lord Wemyss? That Janet has always been regarded as the only legitimate child Charteris ever had; and yet here appears a lady with an alien name (her Christian name is Frances, it will be noted) who speaks of him as her father over four months after he had died. It is a puzzle that I find myself wholly unable to solve. So I leave it to return to surer ground.

What Sir Alexander Swinton, who one would have thought must have been cognisant of the stories and rumours current with regard to his

¹ It is included in Swift's correspondence, and is letter DXLIV in Hawksworth's edition of Swift, dated 1778. A subsequent letter from Mrs. Donnellan to Swift (Sept. 22nd, 1733) refers to Miss Kelly, and says she has not heard from her father "for over two months." Later still Charles Ford informs Swift (Nov. 6th, 1733) of Miss Kelly's death.



COLONEL FRANCIS CHARTERIS.

[face p. 56.]

daughter's suitor, was about to allow of the match is equally mysterious. One can only suppose that Charteris was able, like another villain of the eighteenth century,¹ so to impose on the credulity even of a member of the College of Justices, as to nullify the effects of any disadvantageous reports that might be bruited about concerning him. In any case the marriage took place ; and it was not long before the lady found good reason to repent her action ; for she had not the questionable satisfaction of knowing that her husband's amours, which were soon to become notorious, were restricted to the pursuit of persons in her own station of life. She found that his predilections pointed in humbler directions, and that it was chiefly among girls of the lowest class, and mostly serving-maids, that he delighted in finding his prey. A case in point not only proves the inveterate viciousness of Charteris but is also notable as being perhaps one of the meanest actions on record, as the sequel to the story will, I think, conclusively prove.

Among other of his numerous projects for obtaining money, for which his passion was almost if not quite as great as his mania for women, was the purchasing of property for relatively

¹ I refer to Captain Cranstoun, who imposed not only on Miss Mary Blandy of Henley, but also on her mother, in the face of all sorts of facts proved against him. The case of Mary Blandy, hanged for murdering her father at the instigation of the Captain, is a well-known one.

insignificant sums, due perhaps to an owner being in urgent want of ready cash, or being ignorant of the value of his possessions. Charteris had become possessed of an estate belonging to the libertine, feather-brained and infamous Duke of Wharton, that nobleman whom Pope branded as

“ Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days ”

when he wanted an example to show the world of the result of ill-used ability and wasted opportunities. It was on the occasion of going to inspect the Duke's property that Charteris put up at an inn on his way. Having been shown to a chamber, he presently rang the bell, which was answered by an exceedingly pretty maid-servant. No sooner had the Colonel cast eyes on the girl than he, as was usual with him, made proposals to her of so unequivocal a character that even her innocence, which it is not pretended she had lost, was alarmed. Shocked and disgusted, she at first repulsed his suggestion with horror. But Charteris was no neophyte at this sort of thing, and realising that

“ Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare,
And Mammon wins his way where seraphs might despair,”

he determined to try the effects of glare—in the shape of a guinea—as persuasion alone seemed ineffectual. Still the maid would not ; and still the golden piece blinked mockingly at her ; still the persuasive voice of the tempter continued its pleading ; until the combined effect attained its

object, and saying she would ne'er consent the young woman consented ; and that night when all was still, she stole to his room and there remained until daybreak, when she was obliged to retire.

Later in the morning Charteris arose and called for his breakfast and his bill. Both being brought by the landlord, he asked " where the maid was who had waited on him during the preceding evening ? " Mine host desired to know what she was wanted for. " Why," replied the Colonel (and I blush even more to relate his remark than I do in telling the whole displeasing story), " I sent her to change a guinea, and she has not brought me the silver." The landlord immediately called the girl, on whose appearance the Colonel said to her with a smile—it must have been a devilish one—" Sweetheart, where is my change out of the guinea I gave you last evening ? " The girl who, of course, dared not confess before her master the real state of the case, at first hesitated and blushed, but drawing the piece of gold out of her pocket, replied : " Here is your guinea, Sir, but I could not get it changed." The villainy of the whole transaction ; the astounding meanness of the act, so far as it had gone, would have been sufficient to prove Charteris a most unmitigated scoundrel ; but what followed was worse. No sooner had he pocketed the money than he turned to mine host and related to him the whole story, no doubt indicating that the poor girl had been the temptress,

and he himself merely an example of the flesh's traditional weakness. Whatever lying tale he made up it was sufficient to lose the girl her place, and to cause her to leave that part of the country ; probably to end in a life of shame and misery. That is what I meant when I said before that Charteris was differentiated from nearly all the rakes on record, for he was an unparalleled example of the combination of vice, effrontery, and meanness.

But the action had its sequel, which may properly be related here. Such a circumstance was not likely to be long unknown ; and although no doubt the unco' guid were horrified at the girl's lapse from the paths of virtue, more were disgusted at the revolting cruelty and meanness of her seducer. The name of the Colonel was long remembered in the neighbourhood of Lancaster, where the event occurred ; and when, some years later, Charteris, who had by then doubtless forgotten a mere incident like this in his career of vice, was a candidate as Member of Parliament for the borough of Lancaster, and went again to the place to canvass the votes of the electors, he was probably astonished to discover that he could with the greatest difficulty obtain a lodging in the town, being turned from one inn after the other, whose owners had not forgotten the 'gentleman' who betrayed the servant girl and then swindled her out of her earnings. It need hardly be said that others

besides the lodging-house keepers knew, or were informed of the facts of the case, and that Colonel Charteris was *not* returned as the representative of the free borough of Lancaster. In this connection the fact that he had paid a premium to receive £500 on being elected was probably a far more annoying circumstance to him than the disgust and ill-will of the electors.

In another direction Charteris exhibited an equal disregard of all decency and morality. He was, as I have said, a determined gambler, but his play was not merely successful because of native shrewdness and long experience ; he brought to the aid of these qualities those of the common cardsharpener and cheat. The young and inexperienced were his gulls, and occasionally women, who could not realise that if they played with a man who was at least by birth a gentleman (the one and only direction in which, in the most elastic acceptation of the term, he could be really considered so), they were actually gambling with a scamp who was ready to go to any lengths in the way of cheating and chicanery. His gains in this way must in the aggregate have been enormous : he won money ; he won estates ; and with much of the money he looted from his victims he acquired other property ; so that the practically denuded ex-soldier who had returned to Scotland but a few years previously with little beyond the clothes on his back, had by the exercise of his wit and

audacity, coupled with an almost phenomenal skill in hoodwinking and cheating, become a man of vast substance.

Money, as we all know, is omnipotent. It was so in the eighteenth century just as it is to-day, and by its means all sorts of strange people get admitted to circles where without it they would have little chance of penetrating. But no stranger person ever succeeded in scaling the fortresses of exclusiveness than Colonel Francis Charteris. One of these centres was the *salon* of the Duchess of Queensberry. She was the wife of that 2nd Duke of Queensberry, who was one of the Commissioners for the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland, and whose name is associated with the so-called Queensberry Plot, of which he was for a time the victim, and the notorious Lord Lovat the protagonist. It was in 1706 that the Duke was appointed Lord High Commissioner to the last Scottish Parliament, and as he was in Edinburgh in that capacity, this year marks the date of one of Charteris's most daring and successful *coupés*.

The Colonel had, as I have said, somehow gained the *entrée* to the Duchess's receptions and card parties, and on a certain occasion, being present at one of the latter and playing against his hostess, he somehow contrived that she should sit with her back to a mirror, which thus reflected the faces of the cards she held. Charteris by this means obtained all the information he required ; and to

make a short story of the unsavoury episode, rose from the table the winner of no less than three thousand pounds. The anger of the Duke on learning of this may be imagined. He probably realised that some imposition had taken place, but it was difficult to prove anything, and had it not been, it would have been a delicate matter to accuse a guest of malpractices. Submitting, therefore, with the best grace he could, he determined to make his personal loss at least a means of protecting others ; and with this end in view he introduced a bill into Parliament for prohibiting gaming for over a certain sum ; and this eventually became law.

Not always did Charteris escape so easily ; and it is on record that more than once, in consequence of the questionable character of his play and indeed sometimes through the fact of being actually detected in cheating, he was severely chastised by those he had attempted to cheat or whom he had succeeded in swindling. His character was so bad, and his past so ill bore revelation, that he had perforce to submit to such punishments from fear of worse consequences should he draw too much attention to himself—comforting his aching limbs with the thought of the substantial advantages he had gained, and no doubt concocting schemes of vengeance in his black heart.

If the episode with the innkeeper's maid in Lancashire had no especially disagreeable conse-

quences at the time for the villain of the piece—although the outcome of it was disastrous enough for the victim—from the results of another incident of somewhat similar character Charteris was not to escape so easily ; indeed it had a marked influence on his life, necessitating his leaving Scotland and seeking fresh fields for his impudence and immorality.

On a certain occasion he happened to be going along the road from Musselburgh to Edinburgh when, at a solitary spot, he met a young woman carrying a sack of corn. She was in fact the wife of a neighbouring miller and was on her way to deliver to one of her husband's customers the corn he had just ground for him. Charteris, whose inability to leave any woman alone, much more an attractive one, is well known, immediately accosted her and made one of his usual proposals ; mere persuasion being ineffectual he had recourse to his purse, and drawing out some gold offered it to the girl if she would prove complaisant. But she was not of the sort he took her for, nor had she so much reason to be tempted by lucre as had the poor maid-servant at the Lancashire inn. She would in fact have nothing to do with the ruffian, who, finding neither words nor money effectual, drew his pistol and holding it to the unfortunate creature's head swore by all his gods (gods very much of the nether world, they must have been) that he would shoot her unless she

did as he wanted. The wretched victim, faced by such an alternative, was perforce obliged to submit. Having at length escaped from the satyr she made the best of her way home, and on arriving at the mill immediately informed her husband of the whole disgraceful circumstance. The miller's rage was, as may be supposed, ungovernable, and he immediately set out in order to try to find the assailant. Not succeeding in doing this (and had he done so it is probable that Colonel Charteris's days would have been quickly numbered ; unless of course he had not hesitated at murder—when it would probably have come to the same thing), the miller sought out the nearest magistrate and laid the whole case before him. A rape of this kind was, even in those days, regarded as a serious offence, and after taking proper advice the injured husband cited Charteris to appear before the supreme court of judicature to answer the charge to which the victim swore positively. Charteris was thereupon summoned to appear before the justices at Edinburgh. Knowing, however, that all his impudence and resources would avail him little in a law court, and realising that his known character was enough to convict him on such a charge, he fled from Scotland and was formally condemned according to the laws of North Britain as guilty of rape, without any extenuating circumstances. Had Charteris not escaped from the jurisdiction of the northern criminal code, he

would probably have met the fate which he was to escape, by the skin of his teeth, for the same offence many years later.

The sequel to this unsavoury episode sheds a curious light not only on the manners of the time but also on the power of money in defeating the ends of justice. Some years later, notably in 1722, efforts were made by Charteris to obtain a reversal of the sentence which hung over his head, and which effectively prevented him from returning to his native land, where the fact that he possessed much property and had other ties made his absence not only an inconvenience to himself but a loss to his pocket. His case was deftly put before the king, George the First, with all those palliating circumstances which were likely to show Charteris as a much ill-used man and the miller's wife as being little better than she should have been, and not so much sinned against as sinning. The sovereign had every reason also to conciliate his northern subjects ; he was, moreover, a thorough military martinet who regarded anyone holding a commission as a privileged person ; and besides, he was notoriously alien from the sentiments and habits of the people over whom he had been called, very unwillingly, to rule. Probably the petition on Charteris's behalf was, too, presented at some happy moment by the *maitresse en titre*—the Duchess of Kendal or Lady Yarmouth (quite appropriate go-betweens at such a juncture),

whose consciences, if it can ever be pretended they possessed any, were no doubt softened by the clink and rustle of the Colonel's gold and bank-notes. Anyhow, whatever the cause or the instruments, the fact is established that on New Year's Day in the year of grace 1722, Colonel Francis Charteris was granted a full pardon, a present, it has been said, which "was justly deemed by him the most welcome new-year's-gift he ever received."

In *Fog's Weekly Journal* (No. 14) for December the 28th, 1728, there appears this paragraph : " We hear a certain Scotch Colonel is charged with a Rape, a misfortune that he has been very liable to, but for which he has sometimes obtained a *Nolle Prosequi*. It is reported now that he brags that he will solicit for a Patent for ravishing whomever he pleases, in order to put a stop to all vexatious suits which may interrupt him in his pleasures hereafter." This would seem to indicate that Charteris's inordinate propensity to this sort of thing had again resulted in legal proceedings. It cannot refer to the Musselburgh incident, as that occurred years before ; nor to the still more notorious case of Anne Bond, which happened nearly two years after the date of this satirical announcement.

In *Silvia, or The Country Burial*, the eponymous heroine describes the libertine, Sir John Freeman, as making certain proposals to her : " Vain of his

wealth and his superior birth, with bold, licentious freedom he rail'd on marriage ; then talked to me of love, enjoyment and eternal truth ; endeavouring, by imposing on my simplicity, to render me vile as his own ends." The Sir John of the dramatist's conception has such a striking analogy to the Charteris of actual life that one might almost imagine that Lillo had copied that notorious personage's manners for those of the villain of his play.

We have seen that Charteris obtained forgiveness for one offence against morals ; and if his reinstatement in the army may cause surprise, it is, as I have said, highly probable that he bought his pardon. And there is also a more creditable reason, if it can be substantiated, which it is only fair to Charteris's memory to state : he is said to have been in command of a Royal regiment at Preston when that town was subsequently taken by the Jacobites in 1715 ;¹ and although he was on this occasion on the unsuccessful side, there is no reason to doubt that he exhibited that animal courage which so often goes with other

¹ The version given in the text perhaps does greater justice to Charteris that he deserved, for according to another account he offered himself to both sides in turn, and neither would have him. When, however, the rebellion had been finally quelled, he declared himself on the side of King George ; and swore that he had suffered greatly at the hands of the Jacobites, having had, *inter alia*, no fewer than thirty horses stolen from him. He is said to have received their equivalent from those taken from the enemy. The whole thing was probably only another example of his unparalleled power of 'bluffing.'

animal propensities, and the king may have been favourably impressed by reports to this effect—reports which, in any case, Charteris would take good care were placed before the royal notice.

But the incorrigible Colonel was destined to get subsequently mixed up in an affair which could not be condoned. While in the 15th Regiment of Foot Guards, then commanded by the Duke of Ormonde, he was found to be taking large sums of money from various tradesmen in order that he should enlist them in his company as ‘faggots,’ as they were then termed. According to a contemporary authority, ineffective persons who received no regular pay but were hired to appear at muster and fill up the companies, were called faggots. But this was not the reason that prompted the tradesmen to seek the ranks; otherwise it would have been Charteris’s part to pay and not receive money. No; these gentry were fearful of arrest for various reasons, and by being permitted to join a regiment temporarily, they were able to escape the action of the law. Hence their willingness to pay for the protection. Charteris saw in this another means of making money, and in the aggregate large sums passed into his hands. Unfortunately for the lawless, they are seldom able to carry out their schemes single-handed; a confederate is generally necessary; and Charteris had perforce to take one of his sergeants into his confidence. All would no doubt have been well

(for the tradesmen themselves were the last people likely to say anything) had not Charteris quarrelled with the sergeant, probably, although the fact is not established, on a question of hush-money. Whatever the cause may have been, this sergeant took prompt measures. He sought an interview with the commanding officer and revealed everything ; whereupon Charteris thrashed him soundly. So gross a dereliction from duty required drastic measures, and they were taken : Charteris was at once cashiered ; and not only this, but the matter being reported to headquarters, he was carried to London and committed to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons. In due course he was brought before Parliament, and kneeling at the bar of the House received a severe reprimand from the Speaker, William Bromley, having been reported guilty of the offence, on May 20th, 1711.¹

There is quite a small literature on this case, which created no little stir at the time, and *The Humble Representation of Colonel Charteris* ;

¹ According to Narcissus Luttrell, this event should be slightly ante-dated. Here are the two references to it in *The Brief Relation of State Affairs* :

" February 17th, 1711. Ordered that Colonel Chartres of the Guards be taken into custody of the Serjeant at Arms for beating a serjeant who gave evidence to the Committee as to false musters."

" March 1st, 1711. Colonel Chartres taken into custody of the Serjeant at Arms, was brought to the bar of the House of Commons, reprimanded by the Speaker, and discharged paying his fees."

Affidavits in respect of the charges against Colonel Charteris ; Affidavits for clearing Colonel Charteris from the charges ; The Case of Colonel Charteris, with "demonstrative proofs" and "fresh proofs," and so on and so forth, reveal the public interest taken in the matter, apart from the still more ephemeral references in the news-sheets of the day.

One other contemporary reference indicates that his post in the army was filled without much delay, for among Lord Bath's MSS. there is a letter from Queen Anne to the Earl of Oxford, dated November the 3rd, 1711, in which Her Majesty says : "I will take care Lord James Murray shall have Charter(i)s' company in the Guards." So at least good came to someone from this further example of the Colonel's misdeeds.



CHAPTER IV

THE FINISHED ARTICLE

HAVING thus been cashiered from the army, reprimanded by the House of Commons, and debarred from all public employment, Charteris now turned his attention wholly to two things which may be said to have remained his chief objects during the rest of his life. One of these was the accumulation of money ; the other the pursuit of pleasure—and we know in his case what the word indicates. His methods in the former direction were such as he had already practised often enough before. Gaming, money-lending, and financial operations of a more than dubious character occupied such of his time as was not given to even less creditable employments.

Gaming, at which he had long been an expert, was just now entering on a phase of widespread popularity. During the time of the later Stuarts although it had been rampant it was largely restricted to the Court, where the nobles, men and women, played with an *abandon* which horrified

such grave observers as Evelyn, who saw in it one of those symptoms which revealed that dissoluteness of manners that was exhibited in such various ways during the reign of Charles II. Under William and Mary it went on, but in a more or less restrained manner ; but it had become on occasion a sort of official duty at Court ; and the Little Dutchman, as Luttrell and others record, played on certain recognised occasions at the Groom Porters in a sort of stately way, rather because it was expected of him than because he took any special interest in it.

The real recrudescence of gambling on a general scale occurred, there is little doubt, when the South Sea Scheme was inaugurated. That scheme in itself might not have had disastrous consequences had it not been at first so successful. True it had weighted itself heavily by the money it had originally lent to the Government and by the further engagements into which it had entered. But it had in return received great monopolies ; and given that the public subscribed sufficient, there was every reason to predict extraordinary developments. The public did subscribe with a unanimity that promised unbounded prosperity to the undertaking. Its shares rose to nine hundred per cent., and a sort of El Dorado seemed at hand. Unfortunately it developed that latent desire to make money expeditiously and without trouble which is inherent in human nature ; it developed,

too, a perfect frenzy of speculation among all classes, and all classes crowded to Change Alley to invest not only in the South Sea Scheme itself but in those thousand and one companies which sprang like mushrooms around the parent growth, so many of which were of such a puerile character that only a sort of blind madness could have accounted for their having even an instant's success. Against some of these the South Sea Company took action, and their bubble nature being exposed produced a most disastrous effect, not only on themselves but on the great scheme on which they were modelled. The panic that ensued caused everyone to become a seller, with the result that the South Sea Company's stock fell in one month, the September of 1720, from 1000 to 175 ; and ruin faced all those who had not had the foresight to sell out when the shares were at the top of the market.

There is no necessity to enter more fully into the extraordinary credulity of the public which, incited by what might really have proved a remunerative investment, was led away to gamble in shares in those innumerable companies, no fewer than eighty-six of which were subsequently declared to be illegal and which ranged from one " For a wheel for Perpetual Motion " to one " For carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody to know what it is," perhaps the most preposterous and absurd attempt ever made to

extract money from the pockets of the credulous. How the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Aislabie, Charles Stanhope and the two Craggs, the former of whom committed suicide, were implicated, and how the genius of Walpole weathered the storm, are matters of history. Here the scheme only interests us as forming the *motif* for that great gambling mania which was to go on in different directions, increasing till the latter days of George III. and the Regency, when Fox spent his nights at the Faro table and Brummell and so many others won and lost sums which even in these days when we have come to think in millions, seem incredible.

It interests us especially, too, in another way, because there is no doubt that Charteris took advantage of the mania to make money. He was not the man to get 'left' in such a time ; and no little of the great sum he possessed at his death was probably the result of his wily manipulations in Change Alley and elsewhere. It was during the very year in which he had received his reprimand at the bar of the House, namely 1711, that the South Sea Scheme was inaugurated ; and he was thus at liberty to turn his full attention to this fresh means of making money. We shall see later on that he was still the holder of certain South Sea stock in 1730, and that he sold this satisfactorily. The fact is he could afford to hold on and take advantage of more normal times ;

but it would be interesting to know what he bought and sold during those feverish years (1711-1720) during which England went mad on money and a few acute people feathered their nests.

Gambling in this form was only one of Charteris's ways of accumulating wealth. As we have seen, his knowledge of cards was extensive and peculiar. He was a past-master at games of skill, and where chance took the place of skill he could generally be relied on to find some means of propitiating the notoriously fickle goddess. The incident of the Duchess of Queensberry's mirror is a sufficient indication of—well, let us say his resource. He had at least once been turned out of the army on account of those sharp practices (to give them no harder name) which had caused him to be looked askance at by many a youthful victim; and even in those free and easy days he must have been obliged continually to change his *venue* in order to secure opponents who had not already been fleeced by him or who at any rate had not heard of the unsavoury reputation he had gained. The fact is the Colonel was one of the most inveterate cardsharpers on record, and woe betide the unlucky 'pigeon' who should fly into the vicinity of so unscrupulous and sharp-talonied a rook.

Yet another form of his financial activities was money-lending. He was in the habit of advancing sums to those with whom he played cards, thus

providing them at excessive interest with the very money he took care to win from them again. But he also lent money in other ways, notably on mortgages, a form of usury (as it was in his case) for which he became notorious. It is needless to say that he never advanced money unless the security was of the best ; and the interest he charged would have made many a professional lender stare.

It need hardly be said that although he was now settled in London, probably in Poland Street (he moved to Great George Street, where we know he was living in 1729, later), he travelled about a great deal, visiting the various properties of which he had become possessed by winning them at cards or foreclosing the mortgages he had on them. It was often during such expeditions that he was able to turn to account his powers of flattery ; for his tongue, like that of the serpent that beguiled Eve, was when necessary of the softest and most persuasive. And this brings me to yet another form of money-making at which he was an adept.

Where he was unknown he found it convenient to pass as an unmarried man, and not infrequently he would so comport himself with ladies whom he thus met as to lead them to suppose that they were likely to become the wife of the soft-spoken Colonel Charteris. He did not hesitate to compromise these credulous ones in such a way that

they were prevented from taking any action ; and not infrequently he actually extorted money from them as the price of his silence. There is a story concerning one of these, a charming young widow who lived with her father and her own considerable family of children in Marylebone. To her Charteris introduced himself in the disguise of a foreign nobleman, and succeeded so effectually in compromising her that he had little difficulty in making her pay dearly for her credulity, extorting not only money but also her very jewels ; indeed he so thoroughly entangled her in his toils that the unhappy creature, fearful of exposure and not daring to confess her folly to her father, became so terrified and ashamed that it finally affected her reason and she had to be placed in an asylum where she eventually died.

It seems almost incredible that a man of good family, with already a considerable fortune, could have descended to the depths of infamy of which Charteris was guilty. Such a man if introduced into a novel or brought on to the stage would be regarded as too overdrawn for real life. People would probably say that such degradation *might* be possible, although not even then very probable, in some low-born scoundrel who had never had the advantages of education and had never associated with any except the lowest scum of the metropolis, but that it was incredible in the case of one who was at least by birth a gentleman and who from

his youth had mixed not only with his equals but his superiors. The fact remains, however, that the frequenter of a duchess's drawing-room, the man who had held commissions in crack regiments, the son of a landowner who could trace his descent for four hundred years, was accustomed to send threatening messages to his victims by their servants, and even to wait below-stairs what time the mistress was feverishly counting out her gold and jewels, and to receive the product of his menaces at the hands of maid-servants whom (if we know anything of his habits) he rewarded in his customary manner.

The incident which occurred in the Duchess of Queensberry's house at Edinburgh had become so notorious that Charteris was at least prevented from carrying on his infamous projects in that capital. Indeed 'Society' in Scotland generally was not slow to turn a cold shoulder on such a black sheep, and he was thus obliged to restrict his depredations to places where he was not known or to the London which, relatively small as it then was, was yet large enough for him to be known only in certain quarters. There he carried on his profession as a sort of *chevalier d'industrie* with an impunity that speaks volumes for the morals of the period and still more for the credulity of many of the citizens.

By dint of successful gambling, money-lending, extortion and the lowest form of blackmailing,

Charteris had by now become an exceedingly wealthy man. He possessed estates in all sorts of places, both in Scotland (in addition to Amisfield) and in England ; he had money in the funds ; he had money in mortgages and all kinds of safe securities ; and he stands revealed as the type of the extortioner without mercy and without a particle of good feeling or honour. The following chapter will exhibit him as the heartless libertine and the sensual and foul-minded profligate.



CHAPTER V

THE CAREER OF VICE

N September 2nd, 1731, Hogarth finished the painting of *The Harlot's Progress*—that is if we are to take the date which is inscribed on the coffin-lid in the last plate as indicating the completion of this ‘morality.’ Hardly had the great author (for so he calls himself in the advertisement to this very work, and so indeed he was—an author in paint) laid down the brush than he took up the graver and set about those prints which were published in the following year and set all London talking. As was usual with Hogarth a deep moral lesson is inculcated by these six engravings which record the progress from virtue to vice—and its results—of Moll Hackabout,¹ who represents an eternal type and who is first shown just arrived from the country as a pretty young

¹ This name is on the coffin-lid above mentioned. There was, as Austin Dobson reminds us, an actual Kate Hackabout whose brother was hanged at Tyburn in April, 1730; and Hogarth may have taken the name (a singularly appropriate one for such a character) from her.

girl standing in an inn yard and being accosted by an overdressed female who chucks her under the chin and evidently regards her ‘ points ’ with complacency.

As was frequent with Hogarth there are several portraits in this plate ; and it is for that reason that it especially interests us here. For instance, the elderly female who takes so much interest in the country wench is supposed to be no other than the notorious Mother Needham, whom we have already met in the first chapter of this volume. I say ‘ supposed to be ’ advisedly, because at this period there was another almost equally well-known procuress about town called Mother Bentley ; and there is just a possibility that it may be she who is represented. I base this suggestion on the fact that in a scurrilous poem entitled *The Harlot’s Progress, Being the Life of the noted Moll Hackabout, in six Hudibrastic Cantos, with a Curious Print to each Canto; engrav’d from Mr. Hogarth’s originals*, a sixth edition of which appeared in 1740, it is Mother Bentley who is described as “ the old Baud ” who engages Moll in conversation. The fact that Mother Needham was one of Charteris’s procuresses and is one of the interlocutors of the Colonel in another Grub Street publication called *Don Francesco’s Descent to the Infernal Regions*, published in 1732, and also that her name has to some extent outlived her notorious contemporary, has probably caused it to be

THE HARLOT'S PROGRESS, PLATE I.



assumed that Hogarth portrayed her. The matter is not perhaps of great importance ; but what is, is the fact that the man standing in the doorway and regarding the scene with special interest is the infamous Colonel himself ; while his companion is one Gourley, one of the panders he kept about him for the purpose of running down any likely game which might cross his path.

There are but few portraits of Charteris in existence, and what there are are chiefly such rough and unreliable woodcuts and mezzotints as were prefixed to some of the many ‘lives’ and ‘adventures’ of that egregious person which appeared during the year of his death. Hogarth must undoubtedly have known him well by sight, and probably made one of those lightning sketches for which he was renowned while watching him in some such attitude as is here represented. An enlarged print of the Colonel’s figure alone was taken from Plate I. of *The Harlot’s Progress* and reproduced in Caulfield’s *Remarkable Characters*, and was no doubt regarded as the best representation extant of Charteris. The whole attitude is significant of the man ; and although no face can quite prove a sure index to the mind within (and it would certainly have been a diabolical one that should have truly revealed such a mind as that of Charteris), yet I think we can see in the leering eyes and sensual mouth of the not ill-looking Colonel some index to that character

which has had no apologists because it is incapable of extenuation.

Here, then, reproduced by Hogarth's inimitable hand, we may be said to have Charteris as he lived. Here he is in converse with one pander and watching the machinations of another ; licking his lips, so to speak, in anticipation not only of sensual gratification but of the ruin of innocence and the successful perpetration of another villainy. For besides his innate profligacy he must have loved wickedness for its own sake, and if he did not say with Satan "evil be thou my good," it was only because he could not possibly have wished for good from anything.

In the so-called *Authentick Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Ch——s*, on the title-page of which the subject is described in the outspoken language of the day as "Rape-Master General of Great Britain," the "Impartial Hand" that penned it does not spare the Colonel, and since the latter was still alive (the brochure was published in 1730) probably exercised a wise discretion in veiling himself in anonymity. The author does not hesitate to set down the actual words with which he avers the Colonel gave verbal directions to his creatures as to the kind of prey which would be most pleasing to him. The passage does not bear repetition, but that his panders should procure him "strong, lusty, fresh country wenches," is as near an indication as one can give of his *ipsissima verba*.

It is useless trying to indicate the character of any man without delving *au fond* into his thoughts so far as may be and recounting his actions so far as they bear repetition. I am afraid there was nothing in the life of Francis Charteris which became him—not even the leaving it; for his death was not edifying and it let loose a mass of literature which we could very well have done without. I can find no record of any generous act, of any elevated thoughts such as have not infrequently flashed through the otherwise Cimmerian darkness of the lives of many other rakes. Here all was in shadow, or rather in blackness; and one turns from a contemplation of such a man in a veritable wonderment that Nature could have contrived to produce anything so gross and so mean.

But as a lesson can be learnt from most things, it is well occasionally to contemplate such figures as those of Barère and Charteris and others of their kind, and at least to draw a moral from them even if they are incapable of adorning a tale. We have already contemplated Charteris as a dishonourable soldier, a sordid money-grabber, an unconscionable preyer on the helpless; a cheat and a liar; a hypocrite and a blackmailer; let us now complete the repulsive portrait by recording (so far as may be done) his conduct in the ensnaring and treatment of what may be called his amatory victims.

Among other property, Charteris possessed a house called Hornby Lodge. Here he chiefly resided when in the country, and here he seems to have kept a regular seraglio, which was looked after by an elderly woman named Mary Clapham,¹ probably a discarded paramour whom for reasons of his own he kept in his service. His henchman John Gourley (whom we have seen depicted in Hogarth's plate) kept his harem well stocked ; and in a smaller way, though without any of its luxury of adornment, Charteris's abode must have resembled, at least in its intention, that infamous *milieu* described in the *Justine* of the Marquis de Sade.

The stories that have been preserved of Charteris's habits when in residence at Hornby are not such as can readily be retold. Gourley and Clapham were ever ready at hand to pander to their master's depraved instincts, and any attractive young unprotected girl in the neighbourhood might have deemed herself lucky to escape their lynx-eyes or those of the head of Hornby Lodge. One such was induced by specious promises to come to the house, and being introduced into the presence of Charteris was not long left in doubt as to the nature of his intentions. Horrified, she rent the air with her shrieks, when Mary Clapham appeared,

¹ Notwithstanding this woman had kept his house, and incidentally ministered to his pleasures for years, Charteris at last turned her out at a moment's notice, unprovided for.

and pretending to commiserate with her led her away and promised that she should sleep that night in her room. This the young girl did, but during the dark hours Charteris entered the chamber, and at last, by a combination of threats and promises, overcame her resistance. For three weeks he kept the girl at Hornby ; and then, tiring of her, turned her off to do the best she could with her ruined life.

On another occasion a certain Sarah Wilkins attracted Charteris's attention ; and although on better acquaintance he does not seem to have greatly cared for her, he finally grew to like her, and three children were the result of their 'commerce,' as it was phrased then.

As may be realised, Charteris, owning a large house and with at least two dependants ever ready to do his behests, was able in those days to carry on his vicious career almost with impunity. The relations between the classes and the masses were very different then from what they have since become ; and in remote country places if there was not exactly anything equivalent to that infamous *droit du seigneur* which obtained in France under the *ancien régime*, at least the rich and influential could still act in a way towards their subordinates as cannot to-day be realised. The chief man of the district was a kind of despot, and if like Charteris he was dead to all sense of decency and shame, he could often enough carry

on a life of profligacy to his heart's content. They hanged for sheep-stealing in those times ; but a man might do many worse things with impunity, provided he could pay for them and was sufficiently powerful to obtain immunity from merited punishment.

Not always, however, was Charteris able to carry off matters with a high hand. Sometimes the intended victim proved anything but conciliatory, and the biter was bit with a vengeance, as the following story sufficiently proves.

There was a certain young girl living at such a distance from Hornby as not to have heard of the reputation enjoyed by the house or its master. Her attractions were many and such as were likely to appeal to the special predilections of the Colonel. Whether he himself had seen her during one of his journeys or whether he was guided by the reports of Gourley is not quite clear. What is, however, is the fact that he determined to get her into his clutches, and for this purpose to engage her as a maid-servant at Hornby. But a difficulty presented itself : the girl had made up her mind only to take a situation with a widow or a maiden lady, in fact to give a wide berth to any 'place' in which there was a man. She was an honest and moral girl, and had no doubt heard stories of the fate of less circumspect maids ; or she may have been a man-hater, as it is called. Anyhow, the fact remains that she was taking no risks and

stood to her determination. Charteris, who heard of this, was not, however, the man to be baffled by such a circumstance. Having, therefore, disguised himself as a woman, and having retired to bed, he sent for the young girl. Probably Mary Clapham travelled to the distant home of the young lady and told her that she could introduce her to a situation in the house of a maiden lady of irreproachable character. Be this as it may, the girl duly arrived at Hornby and was led up to the bedroom of the 'mistress' of the establishment. No sooner were the two left alone than Charteris flung off his disguise, and springing from the bed made such unequivocal proposals as to leave no doubt of his intentions. The girl, in spite of her surprise at finding a man where she had been led to expect a woman, and her terror at the suggestion made to her, resisted every attempt made by Charteris, who, as was not unusual with him when he found persuasion useless, resorted to more drastic measures, and catching up a pistol swore that he would shoot her if she made any further resistance. At last, affecting to be overcome by fear, she agreed to comply with his desires if he would only put down the firearm and treat her kindly. Indeed she acted so well, or Charteris's passion got so much the better of his discretion, that he did as she suggested, and laying down the pistol came towards the young lady. In a moment, however, she eluded him, and seizing the

pistol pointed it at him and swore she would kill him if she was not permitted to leave the house there and then. For once Charteris was hoist with his own petard and could do nothing but fume and swear—and agree. The girl thereupon rang the bell, and when Gourley, or whoever the man was who answered it, appeared, she swore she would shoot *him* unless he went before her downstairs and let her out. It is satisfactory to know that the girl escaped safe and sound from Hornby Lodge, leaving its master in a state of ungovernable fury and disappointed desire.

Nor is this the only occasion on which Charteris's lustful propensities led him into trouble. In those days Epsom was a favourite resort. People went there to drink the waters as they went later to Tunbridge Wells and as they go now to Bath and Buxton. The place was then fashionable, and being near London it was also a more or less convenient haunt of the *bourgeois* community, which went there to spend a happy week-end or a hectic Sunday. The place had this character during the reign of Charles II., as we know from Pepys (himself a not infrequent visitor) and from other contemporary annalists, and it preserved its special attractions down to the time of the earlier Georges. Like all such centres where idle people congregate its morals could hardly be said to be its outstanding quality, and it was always on the cards that there might be encountered ladies of easy ethics of all

classes and those who, if not habitually vicious, would on occasion, the air of holiday breathing upon them, prove complacent. Under such circumstances it need hardly be said that Colonel Charteris was on more than one occasion a visitor—perhaps it would be more accurate to call him a peripatetic satyr among those then not inappropriate rural fastnesses.

It happened then on one such expedition that his wandering eyes observed a servant girl whom his equally heedless heart immediately coveted. While at Epsom Charteris passed as Colonel Hornby—for his reputation was so bad that a disguise was necessary—and as such he introduced himself to the girl as a gentleman looking out for an upper servant for his town house in George Street, Hanover Square. The unsuspecting maid agreed to take up the situation, in which she had not long been installed before she found out the true character of her master; and not having the courage or resource of her predecessor at Hornby, quickly fell a victim to the Colonel's cajoleries and menaces. Unfortunately for the latter the girl's father found out what had happened, and coming up to London he forthwith applied to a magistrate for a warrant for rape against Charteris. The magistrate thereupon wrote to the latter desiring him to appear before him to answer the charge. No notice being taken of this summons, constables armed with a fresh warrant appeared in George

Street and carried Charteris off to the magistrate's abode. There he found the father of the injured girl, and after some discussion the magistrate asked Charteris to go with him into an adjoining room, where after a time the significant clink of gold was heard ; the representative of the law then emerged and did his best to persuade the irate father to compromise the matter. Nothing would, however, move him, and there was nothing for it but to bind over Charteris to appear at the next Sessions. At these he never appeared, however ; so old a hand, and especially so rich a hand, possessed means of extricating himself in those days from such difficulties ; and however it was done it is certain that the Colonel got out of the mess. One of the means, no doubt the chief means, was the payment of a large sum ; and it is said that from first to last it cost Charteris no less than £600 to be free from the further pursuit of the girl's father and the outraged majesty of the law.

Another case in which the Colonel was involved and from which he only extricated himself by a money payment occurred soon after the episode just related. Charteris happened to be passing in his coach through St. Alban's Street, a thoroughfare which was done away with when Waterloo Place was formed, when he observed a tall and attractive young woman carrying a bundle of clothes. He immediately stopped the carriage and ordered his man to get out and accost the girl.

This the henchman did, disguising his real intentions by pretending that he had some cast-off clothes which he wanted to sell, under which pretext he induced her to go (as Charteris had arranged) into the Scotch Arms ale-house in Pall Mall. Having successfully done this the man kept the girl in conversation until his master, who had entered by a back way in Little Warwick Street, made his appearance in the room. What happened may be imagined when it is known that shrieks of "Murder!" rang through the house and brought the landlord rushing into the apartment. There he found Charteris with a drawn sword and the girl panting from her attempts to resist him. In this case by the timely intervention of mine host the intended victim escaped scathless. But the incident had a sequel, for her husband being informed of the circumstances found the Colonel out and proved so determined that his mouth could only be shut by the transference of twenty guineas from Charteris's pocket to his.

On yet another occasion Charteris came off even worse, although not worse than he deserved. He heard of a pretty milliner who kept a shop in Westminster; but he was also told that she was a prude and extremely religious, always going to the services at the Abbey and never deigning to read anything less edifying than the works of Thomas à Kempis and such-like improving books. Nevertheless he took an early opportunity of judging for

himself ; and having seen her and highly approved at least of her personal appearance, he determined to overcome her religious qualms. Entering the shop he purchased certain articles and took occasion to enter into a highly moral discourse, quoting religious texts (the Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose, as we know on Shakespeare's authority) and inveighing against the wickedness and immorality of the age. In order the better to sustain the part he confessed that he was a Non-Juror and suggested that the lady should join that persuasion as a proof of her religious sincerity. Listening with demure attention and downcast eyes the pretty milliner indicated at last that so strong and cogent were his arguments that she felt very much inclined to follow his advice. Then, he said, why not come to an assembly of Non-Jurors which is just now being held ? Willingly would she do so, was the reply, and a coach was called. Putting the lady in, Charteris whispered to the coachman to drive to a certain bagnio in Golden Square, close by a house that he had then in Poland Street. Arrived here the pair got out and entered the place, but directly they were shown into a room the Colonel, having ordered wine to be brought, showed at once his real intentions. Horror and confusion of the lady, who from hysterics passes into so dead a faint that it was long and with much difficulty ere she could be revived. Having at length succeeded in restoring her to consciousness Charteris

was able to overcome her objections ; and it was not before the following morning that he dismissed her as having " no further use for her." " No," replied the innocent reader of the *Imitation*, " I can quite believe it," and it was not long before Charteris realised that indeed he had been 'bit' to some purpose and that the presumed maid was of anything but that purity which he had been given to understand was one of her most attractive qualities.

We know that on a previous occasion he had been the victim of a certain Irish peer who introduced him to another 'immaculate' young lady whose ingenuous society he was destined to remember and rue for many a long day ; and the episode of the milliner of Westminster may have been brought about by the same inimical agency. The fact is, the life of Francis Charteris was compact of such incidents as those I have adumbrated rather than recorded ; for complete record of such things is impossible. In order, however, to prove the Colonel's incontestable title of Super-Rake, it is necessary to set down those episodes in his career which were at the time matters of common knowledge and which are the cumulative evidences of his unenviable notoriety.

One or two examples of Charteris's meanness have already been given ; they can be matched by an incident which occurred on one occasion at Woburn. On his way from London to Hornby

the Colonel stopped at the principal inn of this town—a town at that time rather notorious for the unregulated propensities of some of its fair inhabitants. Supper having been ordered it was brought to Charteris's room by a maid whose face and figure at once attracted his notice. After having finished the meal he called for the damsels, and showing her his purse full of gold pieces promised she should have it on certain conditions. At first she proved recalcitrant ; but after some persuasion, saying she would ne'er consent, she consented, and agreed to visit the Colonel later in the evening. In the meanwhile Charteris emptied his purse of the gold and filled it with an equivalent number of copper coins. The next morning on the girl's leaving his room he handed her the purse, and she, suspecting nothing, went off with it. Later in the day, just before he left the inn, his bill was presented to him. Affecting astonishment he said he had already paid it, and that his change had not been brought him. The landlord inquired to whom had he given the money ? To one of the maid-servants, was the reply, although he (the Colonel) did not know her name, of course. The servants were thereupon called up, and Charteris, picking out the girl to whom he had given his purse, said it was she who had received the money for the bill, which she was, therefore, obliged to refund. The story is very similar to one already narrated ; and it is only too probable that this

method of procedure was habitual with Francis Charteris—it is characteristic at once of his moral laxity and of his ignoble penuriousness.

There is no doubt that with such a reputation as he had gained Charteris was fair game for all those who chose to invent anecdotes which fitted his peculiar character and habits. We find, for instance, variants of the tale told earlier of his being outwitted by the girl who seized his pistol and reduced him to ignominious impotence ; for in one of the many scurrilous ‘Lives’ and ‘Memoirs’ which appeared at the time of his trial for rape in 1730 and after his death two years later, repetitions of such incidents under different circumstances are observable. What can be predicated concerning all such narratives is that they were certainly based on a knowledge of his ways, and could hardly have been invented had not those ways been notorious. In one such publication, for instance, the pistol story is told of a certain parson’s daughter whom Charteris had engaged as a companion to his wife—the young lady little realising that that wife had long since ceased to live under her husband’s roof and was actually at that time at least one hundred miles away.

Most of the girls whom he enticed into his toils are nameless ; some were servant-maids whom he engaged under a fictitious name (his own being too notorious to be used safely except in remote country places where his ‘fame’ had not penetrated) ;

others were servants employed at the various inns at which he put up during his frequent journeying about the country ; yet others were those whom his ‘ Mercury ’ or ‘ Pimp General ’ (as he is described in contemporary records) Gourley, snapped up, as they arrived by waggon or coach in London in search of situations in the metropolis. Then there were those whom the notorious Mother Needham or the almost equally notorious Mother Bentley procured for him ; some of whom were not so ingenuous as they were supposed to be, as for instance the two pretty sisters who, hired originally as servants, managed to make a very comfortable subsistence out of their infatuated master.

The name of one of Charteris’s victims is, however, recorded, and the story of Sarah Selleto offers the same repulsive picture of virtue overcome by the promise of gold and the fear of that redoubtable pistol, so often brought into play by the Colonel, as do those of an hundred anonymous maidens whose good names were smirched by this human satyr.¹

One story seems to indicate that Charteris had some extraordinary fascination about him which was able to overcome others than those whom money and threats alone seduced. On one occa-

¹ Sarah Selleto does, however, appear to have laid an information against Charteris before Mr. Justice Ellis in Pall Mall on April 15th, 1725, and stated that she had been decoyed to his house “in New Bond Street” by a Mrs. Prat. No doubt Charteris escaped, as he had done in other instances, by payment of a fine.

sion he was travelling from Hornby Lodge to his estate of New Mills in Haddingtonshire when he was taken ill with pleurisy at York. He was staying at an inn, and a clergyman of the city hearing of the circumstances (but, let us hope, ignorant of Charteris's reputation) invited him, as soon as he was well enough to be moved, to stay with him for a week's recuperation. The invitation was accepted. But the Colonel had not been three days in the house before he had so worked on the feelings of one of the parson's daughters as to cause her to promise him all he wanted. The house was small and the family large, and a difficulty thus presented itself of obtaining that privacy which was essential. The young lady being apparently as resourceful as she was undoubtedly passionate, hit on a scheme which promised success. She said she had a friend in York who would, she knew, be willing to let a room ; and Charteris at once agreeing to this, satisfactory arrangements were made. The two met there on a certain Whit-Sunday, and all would have been (from their point of view) well had not an adverse circumstance occurred. In the next house were some children who had been left alone for a few hours. They, as children (and their elders often enough) will, played with the fire and by some accident set light to the room. The flames soon reached the chamber in which Charteris and the lady were ; and they were forced to jump from the window on to mattresses spread to receive

them, and thus to escape the fate which at least one of them richly deserved.

The story at once spread throughout the city ; all the tea-tables were agog with it, and the unhappy parson was soon the laughing-stock of the place. Soon after, the Assizes were held, and the distracted father took occasion to ask one of the Counsellors who attended as to whether “an action could not lie against the Colonel ?” “ You had better look after the rest of your children,” replied the man of law, “ for it seems to me that your daughter has had too much action with the Colonel already.” It need hardly be added that the young lady had forthwith to leave the district with a lost reputation ; another of Charteris’s victims, although in this case hardly an unwilling one.

There are many other instances which could be given of Francis Charteris’s baleful influence on women ; but they make such unsavoury reading that I forbear to particularise them further. It is pleasant to read of such attempts when they were frustrated by fortuitous circumstances, and still more when they were prevented by the strength of mind and resource of the intended victims. One has a distinctly friendly feeling for the mastiff which, at a critical moment at an inn at Haddington, seized Charteris’s libertine arm as it was about to seize *nolens volens* the dog’s mistress ; one delights in that Mr. Gardner who kept the inn at Chesterford when, being alarmed by the cries of

one of his maid-servants, he found her struggling in the embrace of the redoubtable guest, and although it was night-time forced him to leave the place at once with the prospect of a walk of miles before he was likely to find shelter elsewhere.

Unfortunately Charteris was too wily often to be caught in such ways. He himself, or his myrmidons, were wont to prepare the *terrain* too circumspectly to permit of justice being dealt out to him ; and where for once we find him hoist with his own petard, an hundred times does he seem to have pursued his predilections with impunity and success. He was a monster of depravity and, like many monsters, had contrived to accomplish his ends immune from that punishment which he deserved and which many men who have not done a tithe of the harm he succeeded in accomplishing have been forced to undergo.

In this chapter a certain phase of his criminality has been recorded ; in the next, examples of his impudence and perfidy in other directions will have to be considered. As a study in mankind's innumerable manifestations of character that of Charteris is an interesting although hardly an edifying one.



CHAPTER VI

A LIFE OF DETERMINED PROFLIGACY

HAD Charteris's infamy been solely concerned in such directions as have been described (so far as they can be described) in the last chapter, we should regard him as one of those unhappy beings who have within them the seeds of latent madness and who are fit subjects for restraint and description in such medical works as Krafft-Ebling's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. In spite of his mania, perhaps because of it, one might almost feel a sort of pity for a man labouring under such an inordinate load of lustful desire. His 'case' would have been an interesting one to students of human nature as well as to those concerned in the study of medical jurisprudence, and together with other similar examples—the Marquis de Sade and the rest—Charteris might have caused us to temper our disgust with something like compassion.

Unfortunately for himself, however, he too much resembled the Barère of Macaulay's invective to escape in this way. His infamy was by no means

confined to his pursuit of women. In that very pursuit, as has been shown, he exhibited a ferocity and habitual meanness which are sufficient to indicate the baseness of his instincts ; and the cunning he exhibited in procuring his pleasures without adequately paying for them, and of habitually cheating those who ministered to his desires, shows that so far from being insane he was very much the reverse. The fact is he had another dominant longing—a love of money ; and although on occasion his desire for pleasure dominated even this ruling passion, more often he succeeded in combining the two by such methods as are perhaps without their parallel in the case of a man of his station in life.

If this system of money-grabbing was so deep-seated as to affect even his more personal relations, it is not difficult to imagine how it must have influenced Charteris in his relations with his fellow-men. From a careful study of all the records that have survived concerning his habits and his character it may be stated fearlessly that he never entered into any engagement with man or woman without an *arrière pensée* as to how he could get the better of them and cheat them. In all the accounts of his life one seeks in vain for one instance in which he exhibited generosity or kindly feeling ; for one spark of pity or commiseration ; for one example of a departure from his habitual habit of self-seeking and deception. Many men

have been misers ; many have been bitten by an intolerable love of gain for its own sake ; but one can call to mind no instance of a man who employed such low and disgraceful means to compass these ends as did Colonel Francis Charteris, the possessor of many estates, the owner of vast sums of money, the man who had once been entitled by his position to be called an officer and a gentleman.

There have been those who regard the rich as a sort of rightful prey for their depredations ; those who, needy themselves, look upon others more blessed with worldly goods as legitimate objects to plunder. It is, of course, quite immoral, but at the same time the attitude is to some extent comprehensible. But Charteris was ever ready to reverse this order of things. Rich himself, he regarded the poor as his natural prey, although when he could he was equally ready to despoil those as rich as himself. Some instances in both directions will prove that his hand was against all men when he thought anything could be gained by it, irrespective of their means or their position. I have already had occasion to show how he could cheat a duchess at cards and how he could swindle a poor servant-maid of her insignificant wages of sin. I will now exhibit him as a low schemer on a larger scale and as an oppressor of his own tenants.

One of Charteris's most daring swindles was that which he perpetrated on no less a person than Francis Child, then one of the partners in the great

banking house (the first real bank in the modern acceptation of the word in London) which still exists at No. 1 Fleet Street—‘Ye Marygold’ of earlier days. Charteris kept his account there, and a very satisfactory account it must have been. On a certain occasion he went to Aix for the benefit of his health ; and it was during his stay there that the nefarious scheme occurred to him. He had a sum of £5000 lying in the bank, and this he gave notice, by a letter of advice, he intended to withdraw. The letter was duly received by Alderman Child,¹ and when therefore a bill for the sum subsequently arrived at the bank, although drawn by a stranger, it was forthwith honoured and the money paid out. That mysterious stranger was never forthcoming, and there is not the slightest doubt that he was a creature of Charteris’s, a go-between who received the money and paid it over to its owner.

In due course Charteris returns from the Continent and makes his way to Fleet Street. Not finding Child at the bank, but learning that he is at the Rainbow Coffee House, he first asks to see his account, and observes with well-feigned astonishment that the £5000 has been debited to him. Away he goes to interview Child. The latter explains, but the Colonel is furious : he certainly

¹ He was elected Alderman of Farringdon Ward Without on October the 10th, 1721 ; becoming Lord Mayor and being knighted in 1732.

wrote to say he intended withdrawing the sum, but changed his mind ; he knew nothing of any stranger ; he had been swindled ; and so forth and so on in his usual blustering way. Useless was it for Child to protest ; the money must be refunded or the bank would have reason to regret it. He stormed and raved and threatened all kinds of reprisals. Child, who probably knew his man well enough to realise that he would be ready to perjure himself to get the money but who must also have known that the swindle was the doing of the customer himself, eventually agreed to pay back the money, together with certain charges in addition which the rapacious Charteris claimed.

But even Charteris, one supposes, felt that some action on his part to try to find the illusive stranger was necessary ; and the story has a sort of sequel exhibiting the Colonel on the quest of someone he was pretty sure of never finding. For in the *Brussels Gazette* under date of December 29th, 1727, appears this entry : "Colonel Charteris, who has been so fortunate in his time that he is said to have won Ten Thousand Sterling a year, was cured of the dropsy some months ago by a monk, and returned to England ; but is come over again in search of one that lived with him whom he accuses of stealing a Bill of Exchange, to the amount of some thousands of pounds, and leaving a forged bill of Charteris's in his trunk in lieu of it ; which the Colonel knew nothing of till

he went to the Bankers to receive his money, and found that the true bill was already paid to some other person." Charteris posing as the injured innocent was so contrary to his own reputation that even the writer of this paragraph cannot wholly conceal the scepticism which he obviously experienced at the prodigy.

It would appear that even in Brussels the character of the Colonel had earned for him a sort of notoriety. People, we are told, flocked to see him ; and no doubt the 'wonder grew' how the cold climate of the north could have produced anyone with so southern a temperament and with ideas so oriental in their sexual audacity. Among those anxious to know so great a marvel was a certain German Count (whose name has not survived), but it is probable that this gentleman regretted his curiosity ; for from being introduced to Charteris he went on to play cards with him, and when people played with the Colonel they generally found him anything but a tyro. In this case he proved so redoubtable an opponent that the Count was 'bit,' as they phrased it in those days, for a very large amount.

But, as I have indicated, Charteris did not confine his depredations to men of his own rank in life. He was as ready to 'do' a poor man or a farmer-tenant of his own as he was an innkeeper or a maid-servant. Indeed everyone was a fish that came into his capacious net. I remember

seeing a picture entitled, I think, “The Red Fisherman.” At any rate it represented a sort of demon in human shape armed with a rod and line and gloating over the prey which he knew would have the utmost difficulty in escaping from his hook. Such a creature I figure Charteris to have been ; such a smiling, leering, cruel, insatiable monster all accounts prove him.

Once a tenant of his in the north was in arrears with his rent. Charteris paid him a visit—a scene more easily imagined than described. But in spite of fury and storming the Colonel could very well see for himself that the effects in the house or in the yard would if sold go but a small way to pay the money ; and he had to retire, not, we may be sure, without breathing threats of vengeance. It so happened—and why such a chance was placed in his way the Fates alone know—that passing along the road he met a drover with some cattle on his way to a neighbouring fair. The man stopped Charteris and asked him if he knew of any likely place close by where he could put up his herd for the night, as the day was then drawing in and he would not be able to reach the market town for which he was bound in time to provide shelter for himself or his beasts. In a moment Charteris, whose diabolical ingenuity was only equalled by his ready wit, indicated the yard of his tenant. The man was called and arrangements thereupon made for the animals to be driven in for

the night. But the next morning before the drover had roused himself from his heavy slumbers Charteris appears on the scene with bailiffs and a warrant, and seizes the whole of the animals, as being on his tenant's premises, in payment for the arrears of rent. Useless was the fury of the drover ; useless his entreaties ; the beasts were sold ; and although, aided by the law, the man recovered some of them, sufficient had changed hands for Charteris to pay himself in full. The story does not say what the tenant thought about it, or whether he was allowed to go scot-free ; knowing our Charteris it is probable that the last farthing was in time screwed out of him too.

For all his soft leering ways the Colonel possessed the very devil of a temper, although he generally had it so well under control that it was only occasionally that it got the better of him ; but when it did things happened. A case in point occurred once in Edinburgh. For some unexplained reason Charteris had a furious row with a miller at the market. He may have been the very miller whose wife was one of the Colonel's victims, as we have seen, although there is no actual evidence of this. Anyhow the quarrel became so violent that from words the antagonists came to blows ; and in the heat of the conflict Charteris, behaving like a wild beast, bit off a piece of the miller's nose. As soon as practicable the latter brought a suit against his vicious assailant, and the trial was duly held be-

fore the Lords of Session at Edinburgh. Whether Charteris attempted any defence or not is not clear (I have been unable to trace the actual report of the incident), but he was quite impudent enough to try to justify himself. The case, however, was too clear ; trickery was out of the question (Charteris frequently emerged scathless from similar dilemmas by the judicious use of his money-bags), and he was found guilty and ordered to pay a fine of £80 as compensation to the miller for the damage done to his most prominent feature. Flinging down a bill for £90, Charteris said aloud to the Clerk of the Court, when the latter offered him the change : “ I give it for the Lords of Session to have a drink.” But he reckoned without his host (or hosts). Ordered immediately back into the dock he received such a lecture on contempt of court as perhaps he had never had in his life, and what for a man of his character was worse, he was directed to pay an additional £50 for this further offence against the majesty of the law.

Another instance of his quarrelsome disposition occurred in a far more illustrious *milieu*. He had apparently been playing cards at the Groom Porters in the Royal Palace with a certain Major D—— (the discreet contemporary account of the incident gives no further clue to the name) when, a dispute arising, high words and, one may be sure, fairly fulminatory oaths on the part of Charteris, were bandied about. The Major demanded satisfaction,

and the two agreed to meet the next day in Mary-lebone Fields, then a favourite place for such *rencontres*. Arrived on the ground a fresh dispute arose as to the actual spot to be selected. As a matter of fact one supposes that neither of the fire-eaters was really very anxious to fight at all. The result was that not being able (or willing) to find a suitable place, they agreed to postpone the duel *sine die*. But how to preserve their respective reputations as men of martial gallantry? Their quarrel had been seen by others; their determination to settle it by force of arms was known. How then could either return without some mark of a contest? The Major seems in this case to have been the resourceful one; he suggested that they should give each other a slight wound—a mere scratch—which if bound up would be sufficient to show that ‘honour’ had been satisfied. I suppose they tossed up as to who should give the first ‘scratch,’ and that Charteris won—he would; he always did. Drawing his sword, therefore, he gave the Major not a slight wound but, to use the words of the contemporary chronicler, “a most d——nable great gash.” Writhing in pain the Major complains; but Charteris merely laughs at him. After a time, the wound being bound up and the pain somewhat abated, the Major asks Charteris where he shall ‘scratch’ him: “Nowhere! by G—d!” replied the latter. “You can go and complain if you like of my conduct; but you will not show up very

well in the affair"; and the Major, recognising the logic of the retort, was obliged to put up with the cheat with what philosophy he could. But this was not all. Charteris actually went about boasting that he had disarmed and wounded his man, and had then at his earnest entreaties spared his life!

In the account of the career of that astonishing personage the Chevalier D'Eon given in Kirby's *Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*, the writer remarks that "on a survey of all the circumstances of the life of this truly extraordinary character it is impossible to forbear lamenting the extreme perversity of the human mind which sometimes impels an individual for the sake of gratifying a foolish whim to sacrifice all those advantages which, with the exercise of ordinary prudence, would lead to fortune and honourable distinction. The subject of these memoirs commenced his career with the brightest prospects, but they were soon beclouded by overweening vanity or some still worse passion." If we substitute for "foolish whim" the words "insatiable lust and greed," these words might well be applied to Colonel Charteris. For there is no doubt that, with such abilities as he possessed, with such resourcefulness as he habitually showed, with such native wit as he invariably exhibited, he might have made a distinguished name for himself in almost any walk of life. Instead of which we find him using his talents on every occasion

either to accomplish the ruin of a woman or to get the better of a man.

To give him his due, it does not appear that he was exactly a coward. It is true that he not infrequently declined to take part in duels, but this was rather from an habitual caution which prompted him to refuse such satisfaction when he had reasons for not fighting rather than from fear, for he is known on occasion not only to have fought duels but to have killed his man. His attitude in this respect may be surmised from a remark he once made to the Duke of Wharton, when he happened to be staying with his fellow-rake at his seat at Winchenden in Buckinghamshire. The Duke in the course of conversation manifested his astonishment that officers and others should often with so little reason show themselves ready to fight duels, and proceeded to wonder if courage were natural or not. "My Lord Duke," said Charteris, "there is nothing in it; if a gentleman once takes but a little to the practical part of the sword, courage becomes habitual, as I have found. The reason why most great men are cowards is because they seldom attempt anything further than the theory."

As the conversation proceeded Wharton related the antipathy of his family to the sight of a drawn sword (an antipathy, by the way, shared by James I.), and said he could account for it no more than women travailing with child could for their

often curious longings. After a time Charteris, in order to show the fallacy of this, persuaded the Duke to draw his sword while he (Charteris) did likewise, at the same time exclaiming : “ I will exhibit the various positions of swordsmanship to your Grace.” Hardly had he begun, however, before the Duke turned deadly pale, and finally went off in a faint. Charteris rang the bell, when the servant coming in and seeing his master inanimate and his guest with a drawn sword, imagined that the two had fought a duel, and that the Duke had been desperately wounded. Horrified at the sight, and in spite of Charteris’s attempted explanations (perhaps indeed because of them) the man rushed from the room shouting “ Murder ! ” at the top of his voice. The duchess and the household generally were alarmed and came flocking in ; but a doctor being sent for soon restored Wharton ; and for once, and, so far as my researches have gone, for once only, Charteris was wrongly suspected of a foul deed.

Another instance of the result of Charteris’s habitual hectoring manner which might have had fatal results but that such men as he seem to bear a charmed life, occurred at the Thatched House Tavern. Happening to meet a gentleman there with whom he got into a heated argument, high words arose ; swords were drawn and the doors closed so that the combatants should not be disturbed from ‘ honourably ’ settling their dispute.

But this was an occasion on which Charteris appears to have thought that discretion was the better part of valour, and as his enemy advanced upon him so he kept retreating, until the former remarked : “ Pray, Colonel, advance a little so that I may at least feel the point of your sword ; ” whereupon the Colonel, suddenly darting forward in order to make a full thrust, encountered his opponent’s weapon, which caused a slight wound in his stomach. He appears to have been greatly frightened at this, exclaiming in a fury, “ This comes of my doing as you bid me.” He was carried in a chair to the house in Poland Street which he was then occupying, and put to bed. As the doctor was leaving the room he happened to make a remark in a low tone to Mrs. Charteris, whereupon the patient called out with a customary oath : “ No whispering ! ” Then having signed to his wife to come to his bedside, he exclaimed : “ If I am in danger let me know, for I have great concerns to settle in this world.” As a matter of fact the wound was but a slight one, and the Colonel appears to have been more frightened than hurt. The fact that Mrs. Charteris is represented as being present indicates that the incident must have taken place not long after the Colonel’s marriage ; for after she had borne him one child, a daughter, she found his habits and way of life so impossible that she separated from him

and lived a retired existence far from his feverish society.¹

In the records of most men of hot and passionate temperament it would be of importance to put dates to such incidents as exhibited the expression of these attributes, because in nearly all such cases advancing years have softened their asperities and have curbed their ardour. Not so with Charteris; age indeed with him could not wither nor custom stale the infinite variety of his misdeeds, and, as Dr. Arbuthnot once remarked, "he persisted, in spite of age and infirmities, in the pursuit of every human vice, excepting prodigality and hypocrisy."

I have noted the Colonel's success in gambling. Much of this was no doubt due to his undoubted ability at cards as well as to the recklessness of his antagonists, especially when, as he preferred them, they were young and inexperienced. But that he made assurance doubly sure when playing such games as those in which chance had an equal part with skill, is proved incontestably. Once he was actually caught red-handed with loaded dice and was made to pay dearly by his infuriated opponents, who stripped him and made him run through a winter night to what shelter he could obtain. On a certain occasion his caution resulted in his losing money which he seems to have gained by

¹ There is some evidence to show that she occasionally returned to him, as it would appear that she was with him at the time of his trial in 1730.

the exercise of his brains rather than by the help of trickery. He happened to be at Newmarket in the year 1717 with his friend (and what a friend !) the Duke of Wharton ; and in the intervals of backing horses he, as usual, turned an *honest* penny by cards. One night playing Hazard he won no less a sum than £1200. This he received in various bills ; and when the time came for returning to London, whither he intended to ride, he was exercised as to how he should carry this paper money in such a way as to circumvent the ingenuity of a possible highwayman. At length he determined to place the bills at the bottom of his jack-boots, which having been done he set out on his journey. The way was long ; the Colonel rode hard ; and when he arrived at his destination, although he had been waylaid by no gentleman of the road, he had irretrievably lost his money, for the heat and moisture generated in the boots had had the inevitable effect ; and when the bills were withdrawn from their recesses, lo and behold ! they were a mass of undecipherable pulp ! Charteris, who, like Jonathan Wild, could never tell the truth even when there was nothing to be gained by telling a lie, appeared the next day at White's Chocolate House and informed the company that he had lost £1200 at play, probably, although the fact is not certainly recorded, cursing the sharpers who infested Newmarket. I say that there was nothing to be gained by this falsehood. But in reality

there may have been : Charteris was so habitual a winner that certain suspicions not unnaturally arose as to his methods of play ; if then he could persuade greenhorns (and there were plenty of such to be found in the chocolate- and coffee-houses of the period) that he had *lost* so large a sum, his character stood a chance at least in this direction of being to some extent rehabilitated, and Charteris was not the man to allow such an opportunity as this of doing so to escape him.

In our days it seems incredible that such a man as the Colonel should have been tolerated for a moment in decent society ; and truth to tell even in those more free and easy times he did not get many to associate with him, except such as were new to the town or those who will put up with anything in a man so long as he has plenty of money—and of this Charteris possessed vast sums. Thus he gathered round him a sort of posse of myrmidons who were ready to do his behests—whether these behests lay in the direction of circumventing a man or ruining a woman. It was when he found himself on occasion without this kind of protection that he met, not his deserts, but at least such punishment as he deserved at the moment. Instances are on record of his being caned by infuriated men whom he had tricked or insulted ; generally on these occasions he did not resent the affront, but waited an opportunity favourable to his getting even with his chastiser ;

indeed his passion for money-getting was such that he probably regarded such incidents as of small account in comparison with the fact that he had pocketed some substantial sum. This passion (even when he had become an extremely wealthy man) led him to incredible lengths ; and it is confidently asserted that he even took the bulk of what some of his maid-servants received from his visitors as the result of their services.¹ The litigation he entered into with Lord Hyndford is an instance of his extortion in another direction. It is rather a complicated and dry matter concerning the purchase of certain South Sea stock. Suffice it to say that the verdict went against Charteris, who was convicted of usurious conduct, and that although he appealed and appealed again, in each case the original judgment was upheld.

At one period of his career when one supposes his irregularities had resulted in a more than usually serious illness, Charteris affected to be repentant. It was too obviously a case of ‘the Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be’ to impose on any but the over-credulous. But in order apparently to further the idea Charteris seems to have caused it to be bruited about that he had invited the Reverend Thomas Woolston to his house in order to discuss the latter’s *Dis-*

¹ See a curious story, quite impossible to relate in full here, in *Scotch Gallantry Display'd*—being the Life of Colonel Francis Charteris.—*Anon* : 1730.

courses on *Miracles* with their author. Woolston always denied this, and the fact that, as it is phrased in *Scotch Gallantry Display'd*, the Divine and the Debauchee were good friends, may or may not have been the case. Woolston himself was hardly of that class of clergyman that would in any case be likely to shed particular lustre on anyone. He was a curious character. A deist, he had been deprived of his fellowship at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1721, on account of his opinions, and nine years later had been tried at the Guildhall for the publication of the *Discourses* just referred to. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in the King's Bench and a fine of £100, not being able to pay which he obtained 'the liberty of the Bench,' as it was called, and dying in 1733 was buried in the churchyard of St. George's, Southwark. In earlier years he had written his *Old Apology for the Truth of the Christian Religion, revived* (1705); and *The Moderator between an Infidel and an Apostate*, 1725. Such was the man whom Charteris tried to use as a decoy during the days of his temporary repentance and who strenuously denied that he had succumbed to the blandishments of the hypocrite.

In one of the many contemporary accounts of Charteris there is a story told of his behaviour to an actress in the Lincoln's Inn Theatre. There we are told (among other details which will not bear mentioning) how, persuasion being useless, the

ruffian actually placed a pistol at the lady's head and followed her into the Green Room, whither she had fled as she thought for safety. Even there safety for the poor creature there was none ; and by the help of some of his bullies Charteris overcame her resistance. The affair, adds the writer, might have had serious consequences, but the Colonel's money-bags proved again efficacious in sheltering him from the outraged law.

Now, in Colley Cibber's *Apology for his Life* a story is told of a circumstance so analagous and besides so characteristic of Charteris's habits that I cannot but think that "the military gentleman" mentioned therein is none other than he ; and I therefore give the extract (in spite of its being rather a long one) in Cibber's own words :

"About the year 1717 a young actress of a desirable person sitting in an upper box at the opera, a military gentleman thought this a proper opportunity to secure a little conversation with her ; the particulars of which were probably no more worth repeating than it seems the demoiselle then thought them worth listening to ; for, notwithstanding the fine things he said to her, she rather chose to give the music the preference of her attention. This indifference was so offensive to his high heart that he began to change the tender into the terrible, and in short proceeded at last to treat her in a style too grossly insulting for the meanest female ear to endure unresented ; upon which, being

beaten too far out of her discretion, she turned hastily upon him with very angry look and a reply which seemed to set his merit in so low a regard that he thought himself obliged in honour to take his time to resent it. This was the full extent of her crime, which his glory delayed no longer to punish than until the next time she was to appear upon the stage : there, in one of her best parts, wherein she drew a favourable regard and approbation from the audience, he, dispensing with the respect which some people think due to a polite assembly, began to interrupt her performance with such loud and various notes of mockery as young men of honour in the same place have sometimes made themselves undauntedly merry with. Thus, deaf to all murmurs or entreaties of those about him, he pursued his point even to throwing near her such trash as no person can be supposed to carry about him unless to use on so particular an occasion.

"A gentleman then behind the scenes being shocked at his unmanly behaviour was warm enough to say that no man but a fool or a bully could be capable of insulting an audience or a woman in so monstrous a manner. The former valiant gentleman, to whose ear these words were soon brought by his spies, whom he had placed behind the scenes to observe how the action was taken there, came immediately from the pit in a heat, and demanded to know of the author of those

words, if he was the person that spoke them : to which he calmly replied, that though he had never seen him before, yet since he seemed so earnest to be satisfied, he would do him the favour to own that indeed the words were his and that they would be the last words he should choose to deny, whoever they might fall upon. To conclude, their dispute was ended the next morning in Hyde Park, where the determined combatant who first asked for satisfaction was obliged afterwards to ask his life too ; whether he mended or not, I have not yet heard ; but his antagonist in a few years after died in one of the principal posts of the government."

In those days it was dangerous for a mere play-actor even to refer by name to a gentleman of quality who might have acted like a blackguard ; and no doubt Cibber exercised a wholesome discretion in adumbrating the real offender in this story under the title of "a military gentleman" ; but the whole circumstance is so characteristic of Charteris's habitual conduct that we may, I think, rightly conclude that it was he who insulted the actress and who might have lost his life for doing so.¹

¹ Colley Cibber's *Apology* was not published till 1740, eight years after Charteris's death, but no doubt such anecdotes as it contains had been written down at an earlier period ; this particular episode, as we see, being placed about the year 1717.



CHAPTER VII

BROUGHT TO BOOK

AS we have seen, Charteris, although he had led a life in consistent opposition to all moral obligations, had always escaped drastic punishment. Invariably when he was in what may be termed a 'tight corner' did he manage to escape either by the exercise of ingenuity or impudence, or by the payment of a fine which, although to so miserly a disposition as his it must have been exceedingly annoying, can hardly be said, in view of his wealth, to have been anything more. Sometimes he did not escape from the effects of his ill deeds without personal chastisement; but even that which might have caused a sensitive man the most acute distress seems to have passed over his thick skin like water over the proverbial duck's back. For a period of half a century he had flouted everybody; he had carried on a life of immorality almost if not quite unexampled even in the eighteenth century; he had been detected as a cardsharpener and a thief; he had

been drummed out of the army as a blackguard ; but hitherto his acquaintance with the law courts had been confined to their non-criminal side, except on those occasions when he was able to extricate himself from a dilemma by paying a sum of money.¹

The year 1730 was, however, destined to see him, then in his sixty-ninth year, a criminal in the dock, with “ the judges all rang’d (a terrible show) ” and all the paraphernalia of justice prepared to mete out due punishment to the evil-doer. Often in such cases, although we may be satisfied that the criminal deserves his fate and has only himself to thank for the terrible position in which he stands, a certain underlying feeling of sympathy is extended to him. We picture ourselves placed as he is with all the secrets of his past exposed to the criticism and disgust of the world ; we feel, as it were, the spider’s web of undeniable evidence slowly weaving itself around him. He is in a minority—one against the whole majesty of law. He is struggling for mere existence ; and we feel that if he had another chance he might perhaps make a good use of it. We begin to dwell (in our minds) on his temptations and to wonder whether if we ourselves had been exposed to them we should have made a better fight against their attacks than the wretched man in the dock. Personally I can-

¹ One remembers the line in *The Beggar's Opera* in this connection : “ But gold from law can take out the sting.”

not think that those who do not experience some such feelings, some latent sympathy, can be quite so far from the criminal himself as they imagine. Those who cannot realise the cumulative force of temptation, the almost irresponsible effect of sudden passion, perhaps the deep contrition in the culprit, can only know human nature but superficially, and can have little real conception of charity.

There is, however, a certain sort of criminal from whom all such feelings cannot but be absent, even in the breasts of the most tolerant and the most charitable. Those who with every advantage that life can give make a habit of fraud and dishonour ; who systematically employ their time and energies in the circumvention and ruin of innocence ; who in spite of age continue the course of life which youth and an indifferent upbringing could alone palliate if they could not excuse ; who habitually demean themselves in what we call a brutal way but in a way of which no brute could be capable ; those are the villains with whom when they are at last laid by the heels no one can feel sympathy. Charteris was, as the foregoing pages have been, I think, sufficient to prove, one of these ; and as he stands in the dock, leering and fawning like the proverbial satyr of classic story, one is glad to think that the law can do its worst with him without exciting any emotion in ourselves but that of satisfaction that justice has been deservedly meted out.

The crime for which Charteris was at last appre-

hended and tried, and for which he was found guilty of death (although, as we shall see, he escaped the ultimate punishment), was but a repetition of many he had before committed with impunity, and which he had contrived to wriggle out of by the payment of money or the exercise of sheer impudence and bluff. It was one of those cases which to-day would probably be heard *in camera*; and although it is necessary here to deal with it in some detail in order to substantiate the fulminations against Charteris's character which have been made by all those who have dealt with his career, it can only be as it were adumbrated; for in these days although anything may be said (as it is so often said in fiction) by implication and innuendo, one cannot be permitted to call a spade a spade except perhaps in a hospital or a law court. And rightly so. There are many things of which all the world is aware, but to talk openly about which serves no useful purpose; and the appeal made to the prurient by such toying with certain aspects of human nature as is not infrequently to be found in the literature evolved by the young, and not infrequently by the young of the (so-called) weaker sex, is properly reprobated and discouraged. With which rather long and tedious exordium I will proceed to detail, so far as may be, the incident which landed Charteris into the presence of His Majesty's judges, and certain parts of the evidence which resulted in a verdict against him.

I have already shown that Charteris was in the habit of receiving into his houses young girls whom his procuresses, Mother Needham, Mother Bentley, and the rest, decoyed for that purpose or whom he himself or his henchman Gourley engaged under all sorts of fictitious disguises and seduced by all sorts of specious promises. We have seen the fate that befell only too many of these ; we have also seen how on some occasions the intended victim was able to extricate herself from the toils. In this case a young woman fell a prey to Charteris, but had the courage subsequently to bring him to justice. As I shall give sufficient of the evidence to show what happened, I need only premise that the girl's name was Anne Bond ; that she was engaged as a servant in Charteris's house ; that the inevitable happened ; and that, escaping from the place, Anne laid an information against the Colonel and summoned him before the magistrates. They, realising in due course that the matter was a far more serious one than they had at first supposed it to be, committed Charteris to prison for trial on a capital offence ; all his attempts at compounding the affair by a money payment, as he had not infrequently done in other instances, proving useless in this case.

It thus happened that Charteris was duly apprehended and lodged in Newgate, where, according to one account, he was "loaded with heavy fetters," although he was soon able by a judicious expe-

diture to purchase a lighter pair, paying also "for the use of a room in the prison and for a man to attend him."

On February 25th, 1730, Counsellor Strange moved in the Court of the Old Bailey that Colonel Francis Charteris should surrender himself the next day to stand his trial on the indictment of Anne Bond for a criminal assault. This being agreed to, Charteris was duly brought into the dock and arraigned for the offence. There he was formally indicted, that he, Francis Charteris, of St. George's, Hanover Square, not having the fear of God before his eyes but being moved by the instigation of the devil, did on the previous 10th of November commit the offence complained of by Anne Bond "against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King," and against the statute forbidding this. To this the Colonel pleaded 'Not Guilty,' and the case having been opened, the charges made by the prosecuting Counsel were supported by the evidence of Anne Bond.

The full account of the trial is printed in a pamphlet entitled *Proceedings at Sessions against Colonel Charteris, 1730*; but a complete recapitulation of this is impossible and unnecessary, and I shall therefore confine myself to the summary which was subsequently made for a later publication, as giving all that it is useful to know about this unsavoury affair. The evidence of the prosecutrix, which the usual brow-beating and artifice of

cross-examination was unable to disprove, was substantially as follows :

Being out of a place in consequence of illness she happened to be sitting outside her lodgings when a woman who was unknown to her came up and entered into conversation with her, asking if she was in want of a place, and telling her that she was generally able to find situations for servants. This woman was no doubt Mother Needham, who was, as we have seen, habitually employed by Charteris for such purposes. Anne replied that she would gladly enter into a respectable situation ; whereupon the woman said that she happened to know an excellent place then vacant in the house of a certain Captain Harvey. It is significant that the real name of the owner of this house was not revealed, the fact being that it was too notorious even to be communicated to a poor servant-girl.

Arrangements having been made, Anne duly arrived at Charteris's house in George Street, Hanover Square ; and so circumspect was the household that it was three days before she learnt that the master's name was not Harvey at all. She had been obliged while out of a place to pawn some of her clothes, and for these a footman was obligingly sent in order to redeem them. The man was also provided by the master with money to purchase some additional linen for Anne, but this she refused to take. The ground having, as it



A View of St. George's Church, Hanover Square, from the opposite side of the Street, during the Siege of Hanover, pres. of the Old Town Council in London.

London: Printed for Book-Hill, 1751.

GEORGE STREET IN 1751.

were, been thus prepared, Charteris took an opportunity of making certain proposals to her, at the same time offering her money, promising to buy her fine clothes, and also subsequently to find a husband for her and give her a house. Indeed the lavishness of his promises indicated the fury of his desires. Anne was, however, an honest and decent girl, and she promptly refused all the offers made her, telling Charteris that she came to do certain work and was prepared to do it and nothing else ; that if she was not found suitable she was ready to leave ; and finally that she would have nothing to do with his offers and suggestions. During this time she did not know the real name of her master, so that he must have made his unwelcome proposals to her within the first three days of her being in the house.

It was after this first attempt at seduction that she happened to hear a visitor inquiring for Colonel Charteris, and knowing by report the character of that gentleman she asked the housekeeper about it, telling her that she thought her master's name was Harvey. As it seemed needless any longer to deceive her on this point, she was told that indeed it was the household of Colonel Charteris into which she had been inveigled. Assuming sudden illness she thereupon said that she must leave. The Colonel was informed of this, and as usual with him he threatened her life if she attempted to escape ; he went further and gave orders that she was not to

be allowed to go out of the house, in furtherance of which the doors were carefully kept locked, and no one was permitted a key but the housekeeper and the butler, who, being myrmidons of the Colonel, were alone trusted and who acted as gaolers in the establishment.

She was asked by the Court when she went to live at Charteris's house, and replied that it was on October the 14th, and that she remained a prisoner subject to the Colonel's solicitations till November the 10th. On that day Charteris, she said, rang the bell and told the servant who answered it to send Anne up to the dining-room. When she entered he asked her to mend the fire, and as she was doing this he seized her and threw her on to a sofa which was close by and committed the offence complained of in spite of her cries and struggles, the former of which he attempted to stifle by thrusting his night-cap, which he appears to have been wearing, into her mouth. When she was able she told him that she would prosecute him for what he had done ; he replied by promises of money and clothes, and attempted to pacify her by all manner of means, saying she should have whatever she liked if she would but hold her tongue and say nothing about the matter. Nothing he could say had any effect, however, and when he found that cajolery and assurances were useless he became furious, cursing and swearing, and threatening that he would beat her to death.

Still she held to her purpose and told him that she would take every possible lawful method to make him pay dearly for his wickedness. Nor did Charteris restrict himself to vilification and abuse. Thinking no doubt to overbear her intention by rendering her weak and helpless, he took up a riding whip and beat her with it unmercifully, using both the thong and butt-end to chastise the helpless girl.

At last having satiated his lust and fury he opened the door, called one of the men-servants, and ordered him to seize everything belonging to her and to turn her out of doors neck and crop. This was done, and the unhappy creature, more dead than alive from the treatment she had received, was forcibly ejected into the street. In this dilemma she bethought herself of a gentlewoman in whose house she had once served, and to her she went. She told the lady her piteous story and besought her to accompany her to the house in order to get her belongings, as she was penniless and had nothing but the clothes she stood up in. The lady consented to go with her to Charteris's house ; but when they arrived there the Colonel told his servants to turn them away, garnishing his orders with his usual flow of oaths and obscenities. Besides this, he had the audacity to swear that Anne had robbed him of a sum of money which he variously stated to be now thirty, now twenty, guineas. There was nothing for it

but to withdraw and consider what was next to be done. The lady (a Mrs. Parsons) took counsel of a friend, Mr. Bliss, and on his advice the girl preferred a bill of indictment against Charteris. This had apparently at first been drawn for an assault and attempt ; but on a full acquaintance with the circumstances recorded the grand jury altered it from an attempt to a fact.

Such was the substance of Anne Bond's evidence. Part of this evidence was confirmed by Mrs. Parsons, who, on being asked on what day Anne Bond came to see her, replied that it was on the 10th or 11th of November ; that she appeared in great distress, and told witness what the Colonel had done to her that morning, and that she was a mass of bruises from his subsequent ferocity ; also that all her clothes had been taken from her and were now at Charteris's house, and that she asked if witness would accompany her to George Street in order to attempt to get them back. Mrs. Parsons went on to say that she agreed to take Anne to a gentleman who would be able to advise her what would be her best course as to taking proceedings against Charteris, and for that purpose she carried her to Mr. Bliss.

Mr. Bliss thereupon deposed that he had been consulted in the matter by Mrs. Parsons and Anne Bond, and that the latter had asked him if he did not think she had better apply to a justice of the peace ; to which he had agreed, adding that as the

quarter-sessions were close at hand it would be as well to make also a direct application in that quarter, which she did. The grand jury, on the case being laid before them as an intent, unanimously agreed that it was more—it was a fact; and an indictment to that effect was thereupon drawn up. Mr. Bliss further said that one of the members of the grand jury asserted that Charteris had on one occasion attempted to seduce his sister! It appears by Bliss's evidence that they went to get a warrant the same evening but could not obtain it, and that the Colonel went out of town the next day. This accounted for the delay in bringing the action.

Among other evidence of criminal intent on the part of Charteris one Sarah Colley was questioned; and she deposed that she washed for one of the prisoner's servants and that he, seeing her one day in his house, asked her if she knew any likely good-looking country girls whom she could induce to come to London. She was strictly forbidden to mention his name, but he ordered her to go to the Crown and Wheat Sheaf on Ludgate Hill and to bring a certain Mrs. Betty to him, for which service he promised her a guinea. This last piece of evidence was obviously put in to establish what, however, all London knew perfectly well—that Charteris was in the habit of decoying into his house, through the medium of his creatures, young girls just arrived from the country and looking out

for domestic service. Mrs. Betty was no doubt one of the Needham and Bentley tribe, Mother Lodge or Mother Thomas, all of whom are mentioned in contemporary lampoons as noted procuresses of the period.¹

Other witnesses confirmed what Anne had protested, so far as they knew of the circumstances which occurred after the offence. But the chief and most damning evidence against Charteris was his own notorious reputation. He had done so many foul deeds of a like kind that although hitherto he had nearly always escaped punishment no jury could have found much difficulty in believing him guilty of conduct which was so characteristic of his whole course of life. His defence was poor enough. In fact he had no defence, and was reduced to that last resort of the detected—an attempt to discredit the character and evidence of his accuser and her witnesses. But luckily the girl's past had been blameless, and this was proved so incontestably that all the false swearing of Charteris and those called in his defence was powerless against her reputation. Besides this, the Colonel's witnesses proved to be one and all creatures of his own and of so abandoned a character that it is probable not a person in court believed

¹ It is only perhaps a coincidence that in the scurrilous poem on *The Harlot's Progress* in which Charteris is adumbrated, Moll Hackabout's chief female *confidante* is named Betty—but after all it was a common enough name for maid-servants in those days.

a word they said—certainly not their master nor themselves. In fact the result was a foregone conclusion, and when the jury after a very short absence returned into court with their verdict of guilty, no one was surprised except perhaps Charteris himself, who had hitherto done so much wickedness with impunity that he probably never dreamed but that he could brazen out one more example of a conduct that had become for so long habitual and seemingly immune.

In those days they hanged a lad for stealing a sheep ; it is not therefore surprising that for this far greater offence the penalty should have been death. But although this was so there was so great a distinction then between the classes that a gentleman of fashion enjoyed a license in doing things for which a man in a humbler station of life would have paid the penalty at Tyburn. This gives point to the satirical lines which were attached to a contemporary portrait of Charteris (reproduced as a frontispiece to this volume), who is represented as standing in the dock with his thumbs tied in the usual way. They run as follows :

“ Blood ! must a colonel, with a lord’s estate,
Be thus obnoxious to a scoundrel’s fate ;
Brought to the bar, and sentenced from the bench,
Only for ravishing a country wench ?
Shall men of honour meet no more respect ?
Shall their diversions thus by law be checked ?
Shall they be accountable to saucy juries,
For this or t’other pleasure ? hell and furies !

What man thro' villainies would run a course
And ruin families without remorse
To heap up riches,—if when all was done,
An ignominious death he cannot shun ? ”

There it was, however ; the Colonel had at last carried his malpractices too far ; he had successfully crowned his series of crimes by just one too many, and the whole structure of his misspent life tottered to its fall. I say tottered, because, if it can be believed, notwithstanding the overwhelming nature of the evidence, his own unsavoury reputation, and above all the law of the land, he escaped after all the penalty he so richly deserved. In those days of super gambling much money must have been lost and won over the Charteris trial, for the result seemed such a foregone conclusion that tremendous odds could probably have been extorted by anyone daring enough to bet on his evading Tyburn Tree.

It is a curious fact but an indisputable one that it was due to his solitary offspring by his much-tried and neglected wife that the Colonel succeeded in cheating the hangman. This daughter had been married to the 5th Earl of Wemyss, not only a great Scottish nobleman but (which is not always the case) a very powerful one. What happened has been described as not being “ creditable to the cause of even and fair-handed justice, which knows no distinction between a peer and a peasant”—the writer should rather have said “ which *should*

not know a distinction"—for there is no doubt that what happened is not a solitary instance of the power of undue influence to alter the course of the law. As a matter of fact in this case the law upheld its name for impartiality ; it was a higher power which overrode it.

That power was the king. George II. had been just three years on the throne when the event here recorded took place. It is a matter of historical knowledge that Scotland was in a very restless condition. Fifteen years earlier an attempt had been made to conquer England for Prince James Edward (King James III. or 'The Pretender' according to the feelings of his adherents or opponents), and since that time, although the rising of 1715 had been successfully combated, there was yet a very great amount of sympathy for the Stuarts in the northern kingdom, and disaffection was rampant. It was therefore not the policy of the Crown to exacerbate matters, but on the other hand to do its best to conciliate those who were wavering and to show special condescension to those who were loyal. When therefore a great Scottish nobleman sued for the life of his father-in-law, even when that father-in-law was so notorious a blackguard as Colonel Charteris, it was not in vain that he sued ; and I think we may regard what occurred rather as one of those minor political acts than the mere careless compliance of a monarch with the wishes of one of his great

subjects. George II. with all his faults was, according to his lights, a constitutional sovereign ; and if he inaugurated his reign by suppressing his father's will and sullied it by his domestic quarrels and infidelities, he at least took care to act generally in a way consonant with the spirit of the laws of a land which was in so many respects alien from him.

On the news of Charteris's conviction his daughter, who probably had (as she had small reason to have) little if any marked affection for him, was yet naturally overwhelmed with horror. The disgrace consequent on the public execution of a man who was after all of ancient lineage and that man her father, was too terrible to contemplate : it was a disgrace which would descend to her children and her children's children ; and her husband the Earl felt equally this coming blot on his noble escutcheon. He happened to be in London when the trial took place, and directly the verdict was given he immediately applied to such powerful friends as he had at Court and in the Ministry to intercede with the king for a remission of the sentence. He did more : he sent express to Edinburgh to summon to his aid Duncan Forbes, then famous as one of the most eloquent and persuasive of Scottish lawyers, and later to be known far and wide as the Lord-President Forbes. He was already Lord-Advocate, a post to which he had attained in 1725 ; and he had rendered efficient service to the Government

during the 1715 rising, although he had consistently advocated humanity in dealing with the 'rebels.' There was thus probably no man who could have been at the time better selected for pleading the cause of a countryman. Before the Privy Council he set forth as well as he could such extenuating circumstances as he was able to find for Charteris's conduct. That he must have been hard put to it to do so goes without saying ; but that he made the worse appear the better cause is obvious ; at least he was sufficiently subtle and dexterous to give the Crown an excuse which, for the other reasons I have suggested, it was probably quite ready to embrace.

Again, therefore, after thoroughly meritng punishment we find Colonel Francis Charteris receiving a full pardon and being permitted to compromise with justice by settling an annuity on Anne Bond whom he had so grievously wronged. She disappears from our ken after nearly having been the innocent cause of yet one more distinguished victim of Tyburn. Duncan Forbes for his share in the rescue received an estate of the value of £300 a year ; and one cannot but think that he must have regarded it (being a man of honour and integrity) as the least satisfactory honorarium he ever gained during his career of advocacy.

One or two facts relating to the trial of Charteris have been preserved in contemporary accounts of that circumstance. Thus we learn that

while the verdict was being awaited Charteris found means of instructing his man Gourley to go at once to his house in George Street, Hanover Square, and to remove the most valuable of the contents as well as his master's papers and personal belongings. Whether he was in time or not does not appear, but when the Sheriff and his officers arrived to take possession they found the house barred and bolted, and on trying to effect an entrance they were met by a shower of brickbats and other missiles, and were even threatened by the servants with pistols.¹ All night a sort of siege went on, the mansion being blockaded, and it was not till the following morning that one of the maid's smocks was hung out as a signal of surrender. As by then steps were being taken to override the sentence it is probable that the house was left in peace until the Royal will should be made known.

Charteris was as we know a rich man, and it

¹ This was not the first time the house had undergone a siege. For on one occasion Gourley, who appears to have been of a not dissimilar character from his master, having seduced a girl was traced by the girl's sister to George Street. There she appeared and demanded the victim with so much energy and vociferation that a large crowd collected before the house and sympathisingly began to storm the place. Charteris appeared at the door to harangue the mob, but was received with showers of brickbats and had to beat a retreat. Presently the constables arrived on the scene, and after much parleying the girl was produced. She was thereupon asked if she wished to go or remain, when to the astonishment of all she said she would like to stay ! The triumph of Charteris and Gourley and the discomfiture of the girl's sister and the mob may be imagined !

was lucky that he could afford to pay for this ultimate escapade of his full and feverish life ; for it must have cost him from first to last a pretty penny. In the first place there was the cost of his defence at the Old Bailey ; then the £300 a year settled on Duncan Forbes for his services in the matter of the appeal to the Privy Council ; and in addition there were large sums to be disbursed by way of composition to the Sheriffs of London and Westminster. In respect of these last items there is an announcement in the *Weekly News* for September 4th, 1730, which runs as follows :

“ A few days since, Colonel Charteris sold off his South Sea stock and paid the following agreed-on sums by way of composition with the Sheriffs of London and High Bailiff of Westminster for the effects by them seized on his late attainer and conviction : viz., to Wm. Morice, Esq., £5000 ; to Mr. Alderman Barber and Sir John Williams each £1650—Total, £8300.”

So that it seems probable that the Colonel’s escapade cost him something like £15,000¹ ; a sum he could well afford to disburse, but which to a man of his grasping disposition must have been almost as great a punishment as imprisonment or even death.

It was on April 10th, 1730, that the king at a meeting of the Privy Council gave orders for the pardon of Charteris and his admittance to bail.

¹ Say £60,000 at present day value.

This meant that the culprit was forthwith released from durance and was the final result of what had been officially set forth as :

"The Proceedings at the Sessions of the Peace for the City of London, held at Justice Hall in the Old Bailey on Friday, the 27th day of February last, before the Right Honourable Sir Richard Brocas, Knight, Lord Mayor of London, the Honourable Mr. Justice Price, Mr. Justice Probyn, and Mr. Baron Thomson ; upon a Bill of Indictment found against Francis Charteris, Esq., for committing a rape on the body of Anne Bond, of which he was found guilty."

That the trial was the talk of the town was certain, and we even find Gay referring to it in a letter to Swift dated March 31st, 1730, thus : "Does not Charteris's misfortune grieve you ? For that great man is like to save his life and lose some of his money. A very hard case !" This is of course 'wrote sarcastic,' but that the subject long remained in the minds of some people is shown by many contemporary allusions.



CHAPTER VIII

HIS DEATH, AND CONCLUSION

ALTHOUGH Charteris had thus escaped the extreme penalty, and except that he had been obliged to pay a heavy price for it, although he must have regarded the result with satisfaction, the scandal attaching to his conduct made him a marked man. For there is much difference between an habitual evil-liver who has, however, managed to escape condign punishment, and a culprit who has been not only laid by the heels but has had sentence of death passed upon him. Society will condone anything but publicity in such matters. To be found out is the great crime ; and although it may be argued that Charteris had often enough been found out before, it had only been within a limited circle, and those who chose could affect ignorance of such matters. But when a man has stood in the dock and has had all his private affairs unrolled before the curious eyes of the world, and has besides been proved guilty, it is useless for anyone to pretend

blindness, and the man goes under and as certainly ceases to be, so far as general opinion is concerned, as if he had actually received the ultimate punishment.

In some respects his character fares worse. For after all, death, even when it is an ignominious one, proves a palliative. We are apt to extenuate the misdeeds of one who has paid the forfeit for them; some pity mixes itself with our reproof; and the culprit having paid the price, we fall back on the *nil nisi bonum* of the classic proverb. When, however, a man has done ill and has escaped punishment, we instinctively feel that he has somehow added to his wickedness by wriggling out of his just obligation, and has thus added to his burden of crime by a characteristic slimness or by the luck of fortuitous circumstances which he has not deserved.

It is therefore probable that had Charteris found his way to Tyburn we should be inclined to gloss over his former conduct, especially in these days when the death penalty is so much more sparingly inflicted than it was in the eighteenth century. We should be inclined to say that notwithstanding his guilt in such a variety of ways his chastisement was greater than even he had merited. As it was, however, he can claim no such palliation. After a long life of consistent debauchery, of consistent usury, of consistent viciousness, the wretched old man stands before us unashamed and as ready to

resume his evil courses as nature allowed him. The Charteris of the old Edinburgh days was but accentuated in the Charteris who now left Newgate a free man.

It may be supposed, however, that influences were at work to remove him from the scenes of his latest piece of effrontery. Even if his own shamelessness would have permitted him to return to his London dwelling and to walk the streets, *monstrari digito* indeed of the metropolis, his son-in-law the Earl could hardly have seen with composure such a flouting of public opinion. As much for his own and his wife's sake as for the credit of the old reprobate into whose family he had married, Lord Wemyss had moved heaven and earth to obtain a reversal of the death sentence, and having succeeded would hardly have viewed with satisfaction the prospect of his father-in-law renewing his peculiar ways of life in the heart of the capital. Hints too may have been forthcoming from higher quarters that the pardon was to carry with it certain conditions. At all events Charteris thought it wise to let it be supposed that he was leaving London, and he caused it to be given out that he was going to Bath. As a matter of fact he went no further than Kensington Gravel Pits, where for a time he stayed in lodgings. Thence he took coach and went on his way to Chelsea, where he was recognised, being appropriately accompanied by two females. A crowd surrounded the carriage

and dragged the Colonel out. Nor were they satisfied with this but gave him a sound thrashing. Even he realised at last that it was neither safe to show his face nor even politic to seek redress ; and he at once made arrangements for retiring to one of his northern estates. He was now in his seventy-first year, and if the ebullience of his middle age had not become entirely deadened we may suppose that after the lesson he received he took care to curb it, at any rate in such directions as might be liable to land him into fresh legal troubles.

The difficulty of detailing the life of such men as he arises largely from this : that such lives are broken up into those disgraceful episodes which display the characteristics and the overmastering passions of the subject but do not help us much in our investigations into their normal conditions of existence. The ordinary man retiring after a full and busy life can be visualised as passing his latter days "cultivating his garden," in Voltaire's phrase, or in writing his memoirs, according, apparently, to the invariable habit of our own times. What the man who has passed his days in the pursuit of women, in cheating at cards, at over-reaching his fellows in dubious money transactions, finds to do when such outlets for his energy are closed to him, it is rather difficult to imagine. The rake of the character of those decorative Caroline examples may, if or when he reaches the age of what should be a decorous senility, pass his

time reflecting on his conquests—conquests in which both combatants had at least equal chances and were armed with equal weapons ; but one wonders if a man whose pursuit was after such small game as Charteris hunted, whose successes were merely the result of the combination of bribery and terrorisation, could feel any satisfaction in the contemplation of such exploits, or could indulge in day dreams about such sordid victories.

What one can only suppose in this particular instance is that Charteris, retired to his Scottish home, withdrew as a broken-down man, passing his time in a sort of mental apathy only occasionally illuminated by flashes of satisfaction at the danger he had passed. I imagine that the once indispensable Gourley was still in attendance, but his ministrations of yesterday were no longer to be brought into requisition. One likes to think that the personable young girls of the neighbourhood were no longer liable to molestation ; that the walls of the Colonel's house no longer harboured a willing seraglio or re-echoed to the shrieks of unwilling victims. If his morals were not reformed (and only the cold hand of Death itself could probably have effected so much) at least we may imagine the flame of Charteris's dominating passion to have died down into the embers of impotent senility. One can indeed only suppose so—and hope so ; for there is no record of the last two

years of that lustful, degraded life which as an illustration of one of the innumerable facets of human nature it has been not wholly unprofitable to study and record. We get one little vignette of his last days in a letter written by his medical attendant, Dr. Clark, to Duncan Forbes, and dated February 22nd, 1732 :

“ The terriblest patient I ever had in my life,” he writes, “ is your monster of a landlord. I was obliged to go sixteen miles out of town to meet him on the road from Hornby, where they thought he would have expired. I lived two days in hell upon earth, and conveyed him with much difficulty on Wednesday last to Stoney Hill, dying exactly as he lived, but swearing little or not at all ; ” and he adds : “ He can neither sleep nor eat, and has no other complaint either of pain or sickness, so that he seems to be dying of a decay of nature, his blood being exhausted. . . . As for his own honesty, the only sign he has shown of it was one day when he thought he was going off he ordered with a great roar that all his just debts should be paid.”

Stoney Hill, near Edinburgh, where Charteris spent the last days of his life, had been purchased by him many years before from Sir William Sharpe.¹ Among other places which he owned were Carron House, the fine seat of General

¹ Archbishop Sharp, noted for his cruelty and oppression, had been residing there at the time of his murder in 1679.

Ramsay, which he either purchased or won from its original owner ; and New Mills near Haddington, a property which possessed a rent-roll of some £3000 a year. Among the Portland MSS. there is an account by Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, of his journeys in Great Britain in 1723, and among other entries relating to Scotland is the following notice of this place :

" Just a little before we entered into the town of Haddington, is on the left hand a late purchased estate of Colonel Charteris's, called New Mills, upon a pretty river which runs by the town, I think called Tyne." ¹

It was here that the Colonel's last illness seized him. What its character was we do not know, but the life he had led was quite sufficient to have killed an ordinary man at a far earlier age. When he knew himself to be dying, he (as we have seen by Dr. Clark's record) left off swearing ; which shows to what a pass he had come. Having no further use for his money he also ordered his debts to be paid, an act almost equal to contrition and repentance in the usual run of humanity.

The actual dissolution of Charteris was not unattended by portents. A storm of unprecedented violence raged during his final hours, and seemed no doubt to a credulous age as if hell itself was preparing a not inappropriate reception for that

¹ Hist. MSS. Commission.

unhappy spirit. It was on February 24th, 1732,¹ that that active brain, active not in good works but in bad, active in all the meannesses and vice of which a disordered intellect is capable, ceased to ponder on the terrors of retribution. For an assurance that there was no hell he is said to have offered to give £30,000; and the imaginative may visualise him during the long night watches which were to usher in his final day on earth, thinking of his hideous past and quaking in terror of what the future would hold. What he saw in his waking dreams of the years that had gone was really hardly less terrible than what he could imagine his deserved fate to be. There is a famous picture by Wiertz, in Brussels, representing Napoleon in the lower regions surrounded by the mothers and wives (eloquent with tears and objurgations) of the innumerable hosts done to death in the cause of his ambition. I imagine Charteris so to have seen himself cursed and threatened by those whom he had despoiled, and execrated by a generation of ruined women and cheated men.

It was arranged that his body should lie in the family vault at the Grey Friar's Church in Edinburgh, and this was carried out, but amid unforeseen (although they might have been expected) difficulties. The poor of Edinburgh had somehow

¹ The event is recorded in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for the following March.

got to know that the ceremony was to take place on a certain day. Moved by those mixed feelings which always sway a crowd—feelings of disgust, of curiosity, of mere devilry—large numbers of the lower classes gathered at the place of burial, and when the coffin appeared they made a determined rush for it. It was with the utmost difficulty that the authorities were able to prevent its being broken up and the body torn limb from limb. As it was, its descent into the grave was a signal for a shower of dead cats and dogs and all sorts of offal to be hurled after it ; and it lay there, not covered with the flowers of love and regret, but with the rotting testimonies of hatred and disgust.¹

Charteris died a rich man ; indeed for those days an exceedingly rich man. When his will was read it was found that he had bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to his grandson Francis, the second son of the Earl and Countess of Wemyss, who eventually succeeded his father as 7th Earl.² This

¹ In a contemporary letter from the Hon. John Crawford to his sister, the Hon. Mrs. M'Neill, the great storm referred to above is mentioned. It is also stated that Charteris asked his daughter, Lady Wemyss, what he ought to give the minister, Mr. Cumine, who attended him at the end, and when she replied that it was not usual in such cases to make any money payment, he exclaimed : “ Then let’s have another flourish (prayer) from him.” The ruling spirit, with a vengeance !

² His elder brother was *de jure* 6th Earl, but having espoused the cause of Prince Charles Edward in the ’45, he had to leave Scotland, and died abroad unmarried.

heir was then only eight years old, having been born on October the 21st, 1723. He it was who first took the name of Charteris in place of Wemyss on succeeding to the estates of his maternal grandfather, in 1771.¹ To his daughter, Lady Wemyss, Charteris left £1200 a year; to her husband the Earl the sum of £10,000. He bequeathed his Manor House of Stoney Hill, together with £1000, to Duncan Forbes, of whose honesty he was so satisfied that he said it was forty-five per cent. above Don Quixote. To the Duke of Argyll he left a pair of pistols; to Sir Robert Walpole his stable of horses; to Lord Milton £1000; besides a number of smaller legacies. He is said altogether to have left £7000 a year in landed property and a sum of £100,000 invested in other securities.²

Soon after the death of Charteris an ‘epitaph’ on him was written either by Arbuthnot or by Swift; it is not actually known which. It is generally supposed that the former was the author, as although it is included in Hawkesworth’s edition of Swift’s works, it is there (in a footnote) said to contain the Colonel’s character “very justly drawn by Dr. Arbuthnot.” This being so the reader will not find, I think, the foregoing account of Charteris overdrawn. This epitaph first appeared in *The*

¹ The 5th Earl died in 1756, so I imagine Francis did not assume the title till his elder brother’s death, which probably occurred in 1771.

² For present day value, multiply by four.

Gentleman's Magazine for April, 1732, and is as follows :

Here continueth to rot
The Body of Francis Chartres,
Who, with an Inflexible Constancy, and
Inimitable Uniformity of Life,

Persisted,

In spite of Age and InfirmitieS,
In the Practice of every human Vice,
Excepting Prodigality and Hypocrisie :
His Insatiable Avarice exempting him

From the first,

His matchless Impudence from the second.
Nor was he more singular in the undeviating

Pravity of his Manners

Than successful in accumulating Wealth.

For, without Trade or Profession,

Without Trust of public Money,

And without bribe-worthy Service,

He acquired, or more properly created,

A Ministerial Estate.

He was the only Person of his Time

Who could cheat without the Mask of Honesty,

Retain his primeval Meanness

When possessed of ten thousand a year.

And, having daily deserved the Gibbet for what
he did,

Was at last condemned to it for what

He could not do.

O indignant Reader !

Think not his Life useless to Mankind !

Providence connived at his execrable Designs

To give to after-Ages

A conspicuous Proof and Example

Of how small estimation is exorbitant Wealth

In the Sight of God,

By His bestowing it on the most unworthy of all

Mortals.¹

¹ This epitaph, with a Latin version, is given in *The Grub Street Journal* (No. 329) for July 7th, 1757. Variants are to be found in *The London Magazine* for April, 1732, and Pope's *Moral Essays* (Ep. iii., note; 1736 ed.).

Swift contented himself with an epigram :

“Here Francis Chartres lies—be civil !
The rest God knows—perhaps the Devil.”

But this is by no means the only reference to be found in Swift's works to the man whose infamy was in everyone's mouth ; for besides several passing notices generally holding the Colonel up as an awful example, he is specially alluded to in one of Swift's coarsest (and that is saying much) poetical productions—*An excellent new Ballad : or The true English Dean¹ to be hanged for a Rape*, written in 1730, the ninth stanza of which runs as follows :

“Ah ! dost thou envy the brave Col'nel Chartres,
Condemn'd for thy crime at three score and ten ?
To hang him all England would lend him their garters ;
Yet he lives, and is ready to ravish again.”

Nor is Pope less sparing in references to the Colonel, and in his *Moral Essays* he speaks of “Chartres and the Devil” as an appropriate conjunction ; and in the *Essay on Man* asks :

“Shall some old Temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall ? ”

¹ This was Dr. Sawbridge, Dean of Fernes. It is but fair to Charteris's memory to say that Swift, writing to Pope in 1736, remarked that there were in existence many “old villains and monsters, four-fifths of whom are more wicked and stupid than Chartres.” The latter is quite probable, the former seems hardly possible.

Nor is this all. In his *Horace Imitated* we find the following allusion to Charteris :

“So drink with Walters, or with Chartres eat,
They'll never poison you, they'll only cheat.”

And again :

“Or shall we every decency confound,
Through taverns, stews and bagnios take our round,
Go dine with Chartres, in each vice outdo
K—I's lewd cargo, or Tyrawley's crew ?”

While in the *Satires of Dr. Donne versified* the poet remarks :

“I pass o'er all those confessors and martyrs,
Who live like Sutton, or who die like Chartres.”

But taken as a whole the references to Francis Charteris either in the prose or poetry of the period are not very numerous. His was not a savoury name to conjure with, and it is only in such satiric verses as those of Swift or Pope that he is alluded to, as being a not inappropriate subject to point their moral. In the diaries and letters of the times he does not often enter ; he was too early for Walpole, who can only tell Lord Hailes on one occasion that “Charteris I have seen, but cannot say I have at all a perfect idea of him ;” while in Lady Suffolk’s correspondence he enters only in a “Satiric List of Pictures” wherein the point lies in the juxtaposition of opposites, and, appropriately, “A Piece of Devotion” is given as by Colonel Charteris, with a note appended : “This irony needs no explanation.” There is, however,

one poem specially devoted to him. It was published in 1732 at the price of sixpence, and the title runs thus : *Don Francisco's Descent to the Infernal Regions, an Interlude. London. Printed for S. Slow, and Sold next E. Lynn's, a Whipmaker over against Devereux Court, Without Temple Bar.*" On the title are the following lines by Roscommon :

" My unprepared and unrepenting breath
Was snatched away by the swift hand of Death,
And I with all my sins about me, hurl'd
To th' utter darkness of the lower world,
A dreadful place ! "

The scene is laid in the infernal regions, and there enters the ghost of Mother Needham, who delivers herself as follows :

" Is't not Francisco to my view appears ?
By Hell, 'tis he. Hence ! Vanish all my fears.
Thanks to the Fates who've cut his thread in twain
And brought the Goat unto my arms again."

Charon then appears and remarks that :

" Never before has Hell received such a guest,"
and adds :

" Fame's trumpet long has sounded all your deeds,
Your rapes, your murders, shook our shores and reeds."

Subsequently Charteris engages in talk with Pluto and Mother Needham, and exclaims :

" Ha ! can I fear, when mighty Needham's by ?
In whose blest arms entranced I'd ever lye.
Trusty procuress, ransack all your shores,
And fetch Francisco a young brace of w——s."

The scene closes with further talk between the

Colonel and his procuress and a chorus of Furies. The whole thing is one of those scurrilous, doggerel emanations from the pen of some hack writer who probably starved on pandering to the taste for such things, and to whom the existence of Charteris meant maybe a much needed meal.

But our hero (what a *hero!*) has been perpetuated by the brush and the graver as well as by such a prostituted pen. We have already seen how the great satirist of the age has immortalised Charteris's vice in the first plate of *The Harlot's Progress*, and other portraits of him are extant. Before, however, referring to them more directly, I would note that the production of Hogarth's 'printed morality' resulted in a publication in which the pictures were roughly reproduced, accompanied by a so-called 'poem' describing the life and adventures of the heroine—Moll Hackabout. This production has special reference to Charteris, whose name (as will be seen) occurs several times on the title-page. This title reads thus :

The
HARLOT'S PROGRESS.
Being the Life of the noted
MOLL HACKABOUT,
In six Hudibrastic Cantos.
With
A curious Print to each Canto, engrav'd
From MR. HOGARTH'S originals.

Containing

I. Her coming to Town in the *York Waggon*; and being betray'd by an old Bawd into the arms of Colonel Ch——s; with several comical Dialogues, etc.

II. Her being kept by a Jew; with her intrigues in his House.

III. Her living in a Bawdy-house in *Drury Lane*. A diverting list of the Decorations of her Lodging. Her being detected by Sir J——n G——n, etc.

IV. Her usage in *Tothill Fields* Bridewell; and the Humours of the Place.

V. Her Sickness and Death. Disputes between two noted Quacks. Her last Will.

VI. Burial. Characters of the principal Assistants at the Funeral Pomp, etc.

VII. A curious and entertaining Riddle, which *Moll* learned of the *Jew*, while in his keeping, and which Colonel Ch——s could never answer to her Satisfaction.

Whereunto is prefix'd, never before printed,
A most Excellent Ballad (sent from *Scotland* presently after
the Burial of Col. Ch——s) intitl'd *Satan's Defeat*; or *Jack Presbyter Triumphant*.

London.

Printed for and Sold by R. Montagu, at the *General Post Office*, the Corner of *Great Queen Street*, near *Drury Lane*; likewise Sold by C. Corbett, at *Addison's Head*, in *Fleet Street*.
MDCCXL.

(Price Two Shillings)¹

¹ Lowndes mentions this as being first published in 1742. My copy is the 6th edition and is dated, as above, 1740. Lowndes also notes apparently another form of the work, with the title *The Harlot's Progress, or The Humours of Drury Lane*; London, 1732, 8vo, with cuts to each canto in chiaro-obscuro, of which, he says, a sixth edition appeared in 1753. But my copy, with the title as in the text, has the six plates—not mentioned by Lowndes. I imagine the two are substantially the same book

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS



Her coming to Town on the first Whitting, harboring bethwixt the Arms of Col' C—

THE HARLOT'S PROGRESS, ADAPTED.

This ‘contents bill’ will give a pretty good idea of the nature of the production, which it is not needful, nor indeed possible, here to particularise further. The six plates which illustrate it are very rough and ready copies of Hogarth’s great series, and as a proof of how inartistically they represent the originals, I give a reproduction of one of them here. Moreover the inscription beneath it connects it directly with Colonel Charteris (the man standing in the doorway); with his henchman Gourley, who is talking to him; and with Mother Needham, who is addressing the neophyte who was to become Moll Hackabout.

In the Catalogue of the Satirical Prints preserved in the British Museum mention is incidentally made of a poem entitled *Harlequin-Horace*, by James Miller, published in 1729, in which these lines appear :

“Old age in youthful pleasures steep delight
And like grim Ch——s drink, wench, game and bite ;
Have each weak side supported by a w——e,
And ravish Drury-virgins by the score.”

Besides these casual allusions to Charteris in the literature of the period there is a number of works extant directly dealing with his career and crimes

and that Lowndes has confused them. One Joseph Gay also produced *The Lure of Venus, or a Harlot’s Progress, an heroic-comical Poem*, 1733—which was founded on Hogarth’s series—of which some copies have plates; and also *The Progress of a Rake; or, The Templar’s Exit*, in ten cantos, in Hudibrastic verse, 1732. I imagine Gay to have been the author of the work described in the text.

(if one can separate the two). There is, for instance, a *History of Colonel Francis Chartres* by an anonymous author, published probably in 1730, although it bears no date ; there is *Scotch Gallantry Displayed, or the Life of Francis Charteris*, also anonymously brought out in 1730 ; there are the *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Chartres*, issued, I believe, in 1732 ; the *Life of Colonel Don Francisco* by an unknown author, probably about 1732, having a rough wood-cut portrait of the Colonel ; and *The History of Colonel Francis Charteris from his Birth to his present catastrophe in Newgate*, 4to, 1730, with a mezzotint portrait which may, however, have been merely inserted and not originally published in the volume. In addition there are various legal publications concerned with law cases in which he was involved in 1711, 1724, etc. ; which, however, it is not necessary here to particularise.¹

It might seem from this that there is ample material for a biography. But many of these (most of them indeed) merely repeat the salient incidents of his life as likely to attract attention, and unfortunately, like indifferent witnesses, they do not by any means all agree on the details ; nor can one deduce from them any satisfactory chrono-

¹ In *The Dunciad*, 1728, Pope refers to a certain Norton and "his never blushing head," and in a footnote the fact is mentioned that he is writing a life of Charteris. This was Norton de Foe, who is supposed to have been a natural son of the author of *Robinson Crusoe*.

logical sequence of these events. In one way, therefore, the multiplicity of these records is worse than if there were but one, although here and there the reader can gain some bit of knowledge not to be found recorded in all.

The iconography of the subject is meagre. For besides Hogarth's portrait and the wood-cut and mezzotint alluded to above, there are only three prints recorded among the British Museum satirical series containing portraits of Charteris. The first is an actual representation of him as he appeared at his trial, and is reproduced as a frontispiece to this volume. It is lettered *Colonel Francesco*, and is a mezzotint showing him standing in the dock with his thumbs held together and beneath it the lines already quoted. There is also an allegorical print (dated May, 1730) entitled *To the glory of Colonel Don Francisco upon his delivery out of Gaol*. Upon a pedestal, which bears a Latin inscription and is decorated with the arms of Charteris and a motto "*This is our Charter*," are four Corinthian columns from which spring four arches. Within these columns Colonel Charteris is shown ascending some steps, which are covered with purses of gold, from a prison door. Plutus, seated on a cloud, takes his hand to assist him, and at the same time restrains Justice from punishing him. Above is Venus in her car drawn by doves presenting to him two nymphs. Mercury, holding cards in his hands and with title-deeds stuck about his draperies,

steps forward to receive him. On the plinth of the Temple is inscribed :

*"Pray what is Hercules the Hydra-killing
To C——s with two Plums from scarce a shilling."*

There is a very elaborate key to the plate engraved beneath it.

The last Charteris print represents the Colonel contemplating a recumbent figure of Venus, probably taken from the famous painting by Titian. The goddess is lying on a couch in a nude state, while a man (Charteris) in the costume of William III.'s reign is standing by, and as he removes his hat with one hand, with the other he draws back the curtain in order the better to see the figure. It has been supposed that this was a satire directed against Bolingbroke ; but on a copy sold in 1826 by Stewart, Wheatley and Adland, the name of Charteris had been written, and there is every likelihood that it is he who is represented thus characteristically.

Such as I have attempted to represent him was Colonel Francis Charteris, the type par-excellence of the super-rake. It is a pleasant thing for a biographer when in spite of general opinion he is able to point out at least one redeeming feature in the otherwise repulsive lineaments of his subject. But I am bound to confess that I have sought in vain in the career of Charteris for a single deed which might indicate some latent good quality in

his character, some slight indication that under more favourable circumstances he would have been a better citizen or a more attractive man. I have compared him *mutatis mutandis* with the Barère of history ; but even Barère, shameless and degraded as he was, has had his apologists—although to be sure their feeble pipings have been drowned in the roar of Macaulay's invective. Charteris, however, has not succeeded in getting anyone to say a good word for him, for the simple reason that it is impossible to twist any of his deeds or actions into anything even remotely resembling those of an honest or a moral man. Nothing quite like him is, I believe, to be found in history or fiction—except it be perhaps in the filthy Yahoos of Swift's disordered imagination, grinning and obscenely gesticulating at us from the pages of the most terrible of all satires. In an age far less squeamish than our own—a time when things were said and done openly which our more restrained period, even with its tendency to open discussion of all the *arcana* of life, would properly resent—Charteris became a byword. Even in his old age no tears of dotage flowed from those eyes, but rather the unabated lustful concupiscence of his early manhood ; he might have been “ a show,” as he certainly was, standing in the dock of the Old Bailey, but he was anything but a driveller. Should any apologist try to excuse his conduct as due to a temperamental idiosyncrasy, the retort would at once be forth-

coming that instead of fighting against it he habitually pandered to his wholly un-regulated passions, that without even the excuse of poverty he cheated, that without even the excuse of low environment he demeaned himself more indecently and immorally than the lowest denizens of the London which his presence disgraced. He was so bad a man that even the title of a rake, as we accept it, is degraded by its association with his person and his ways.

PHILIP, DUKE OF WHARTON



CHAPTER I

“ ALL THE ADVANTAGES ”

THE name of Philip, Duke of Wharton, is one that is not perhaps familiar to the majority of readers, or if it be, it is, I expect, about the only thing concerning that egregious person which is known. His notoriety has become somewhat obscured by the more widely recognised personality of his father, Thomas, Marquis of Wharton, a rake himself but one whose political activities have softened for posterity the hard lines of his personal peccadillos and who has come down to us chiefly as the one-time active Whig politician—a Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, a Lord Privy Seal, and the rest, and as the reputed author of the once famous *Lilliburlero* which at the time was in everybody's mouth and, as such things have sometimes a habit of being, was for more than a little in the Revolution of 1688.

This Marquis of Wharton (he had succeeded his father as Baron Wharton in 1696 and had been created a Marquis in 1715) was in many respects a

remarkable man, and perhaps in nothing more than in that gift of seemingly perpetual youth which caused Swift to write of him in 1710, when he must have been very nearly if not quite seventy, that he “has some years passed his grand climacteric without any visible effects of old age, either on his body or his mind. His behaviour is in all forms that of a young man of five-and-twenty.” I record this trait because it is probable that the perennial youthfulness of the father may have had something to do with the son’s curiously complex character. For the Marquis must have been about fifty-eight at the time of Philip’s birth, and those curious in physiology may be able to trace in such a circumstance—I mean in the mature age but youthful proclivities of the sire, together with his singular abilities combined with loose habits—those two characteristics which were present—the one in a more, the other in a less, degree—in his offspring.

We have already seen in the case of Francis Charteris how in spite of birth and gentle upbringing, in spite of those advantages which good example is supposed to produce, a natural turbulence of temperament and an unrestrained use of the inherent passions are capable of falsifying all hopes and stultifying all gifts. So it was in the case of the Duke of Wharton. I do not for a moment wish to indicate that his conduct was even in a remote degree comparable with that which disgraced the name of Charteris. A man may very

well be a rake and a ne'er-do-well without even remotely approaching in his conduct or his habits one who was alone and unapproachable in such respects. But I do mean to say that Wharton, who at his birth might have seemed to bring "all the graces in his train," frittered away the better part of his life in a course of *idlesse* and worse, which seems only to be accentuated by the fact that he showed himself occasionally to be possessed of a mind of extraordinary vigour and attainments which, better used, might have left his memory crowned with laurels rather than with the myrtle which the tolerant may choose to scatter on his misused qualities and his perverted talents. Dr. King, in his *Anecdotes of His Own Times*, says of Wharton that he had "very bright parts, a great vivacity, a quick apprehension, a ready wit and a natural eloquence, and all improved by an excellent education." With such advantages, indeed, had his father the old Marquis endowed him, advantages which with a proper personal cultivation would, one cannot but think, have placed him at the top of whatever ladder he chose to climb, and have resulted in his earning, as Argyll did, the famous apostrophe of Pope, which might have run:

"Wharton, the state's whole thunder born to wield,
And shake alike the senate and the field."

So far from this happening, however, the same poet has left us some very different lines as a record

of what Wharton was and did, and it is by those lines indeed that the Duke's personality is to-day best remembered. How do they run ?

“ Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days,
 Whose ruling passion was a love of praise.
 Born with whate'er could win it from the wise,
 Women and fools must like him, or he dies ;
 Though raptured senates hung on all he spoke,
 The club must hail him master of the joke.
 Shall parts so various aim at nothing new ?
 He'll shine a Tully and a Wilmot too.

Thus with each gift of nature and of art,
 And wanting nothing but an honest heart ;
 Grown all to all, from no one vice exempt,
 And most contemptible, to shun contempt ;
 His passion still, to covet general praise,
 His life to forfeit it a thousand ways ;
 A constant bounty which no friend has made ;
 An angel tongue which no man can persuade ;
 A fool with more of wit than all mankind ;
 Too rash for thought, for action too refined.

A tyrant to the wife his heart approved,
 A rebel to the very king he loved ;
 He dies, sad outcast of each church and state ;
 And, harder still ! flagitious, yet not great.”

Allowing that when the “ wicked wasp of Twit’nam ” wished to sting he could do so more thoroughly than most, there is no doubt that this ‘ character ’ of the Duke is a substantially correct one. The lines indicate the prevailing weakness of his disposition, an extraordinary instability

which nullified all the undoubtedly excellent gifts with which he had from birth been endowed. Perhaps no man ever wasted so consistently his natural abilities ; his changefulness of temperament was as marked as was that of the 2nd Duke of Buckingham. Indeed there is much in common between the rake of Charles's time and the rake of Queen Anne's day. Both possessed gifts far above the average, both exhibited on occasion supreme ability : Buckingham when he produced *The Rehearsal*, Wharton when he made his great speech in defence of Atterbury. But these were but meteoric flash-lights illuminating more markedly the low-lying miasma-swamps of dissoluteness and disgrace. Not for nothing was Wharton called “ the infamous Duke ” in his own day. Looking back with the calmness begotten of the passed years one hesitates to apply that epithet as loosely as people were once in the habit of doing. We can certainly call Charteris infamous—no adjective is too strong in his connection—but somehow with all his failings and shortcomings Wharton seems hardly to deserve so extreme a penalty of language, and if we substitute ‘ scandalous ’ for the stronger word we shall, I think, get a better conception of his character, so far as one can by a phrase, than if we judge him by the standard connoted by this rather drastic term. In any case his general conduct and certain special exploits are sufficient to place him in the

category in which Rochester and Buckingham before him, and 'Old Q' and Barrymore after, were striking examples of be-coroneted rakes.

Philip Wharton, eldest son of Thomas, 5th Baron Wharton, created a Marquis in 1715, and his second wife the Hon. Lucy Loftus, daughter of Adam Lord Lisburn, whom he married in 1691, was born at Adderbury, Oxfordshire, in December (the actual day is not specified), 1698.¹ He came of an ancient and illustrious family, its founder, Sir Thomas Wharton, having been created a peer by Henry VIII. for prowess in arms and for a variety of services to the Crown in more peaceful directions. The old Marquis was a man who had his own ideas about education, and although he seems in some respects to have gone about it in a wrong way, his method of bringing up his heir was one which had something to recommend it. Fearful (perhaps as only a rake can be fearful when a thing concerns somebody he really cares for) of the possible contamination of a public school and the licence of a university, he determined that Philip should be kept guarded from such perils, and to that end had him educated at home and brought up under his own guardian eye, with a view to turning him out a perfect patriot—otherwise a Whig.

¹ He was baptized on January 5th, 1699. "This day," says Luttrell, "his Majestie and the duke of Shrewsbury stood godfathers to the lord Wharton's son, and the princesse of Denmark godmother." *Brief Relation of State Affairs.*



Philip, Duke of Wharton,

PHILIP, DUKE OF WHARTON.

[See p. 174.]

So far as the absorbing of knowledge was concerned the plan worked admirably : the boy became not only an excellent scholar but obviously indicated a capacity far beyond the ordinary. We are told that at the tender age of thirteen his reading and memory were such that he was able to quote Virgil and Horace with a comprehensive facility that astonished everyone. Nor was he less forward in the knowledge of ancient and modern history ; while English literature unfolded its scroll to his delighted capacity, and he bid fair to be one of those Admirable Crichtons the extent of whose information seems only bounded by the knowledge of those who attempt to plumb it. He was instructed, too, in thinking out and writing upon any subject submitted to him, and the Marquis, whose life had been passed in an alternation of revelry and political activity, found a new subject for interest and excitement in teaching his son's young ideas how to shoot. One special art was early inculcated : that of oratory, and small and select audiences were assembled to listen to the young boy reciting long passages from the great dramatists and fighting (oratorically) over again many a battle of words which had first resounded within the walls of the upper house. Indeed Lord Wharton could hardly have charged himself with having neglected in the slightest degree or in any direction the means of turning out a complete prig. That the young man never became this was

due to some latent characteristic which he had perhaps inherited from his father, as he undoubtedly had his astonishing capacity. Had he been a prig I should probably have had no occasion to write of him as a rake ; so that his very failings in one direction may be said to have saved him from falling into another less hurtful, but somehow more unsympathetic, when regarded from a distant standpoint.

Wharton's physical abilities seem to have equalled in precocity his intellectual attainments ; and at an age when the majority of boys are fagging for their elders at public schools and are still treated as children, he was not merely casting sheep's eyes at the pretty young girls in the neighbourhood of his ancestral home but actually fell in love with one of them and, what is more astounding, married her out of hand. He was but sixteen and three months' old when he allied himself, with the convenient aid of a Fleet parson, to Miss Martha Holmes, the daughter of Major-General Holmes, on March 2nd, 1715, he then bearing the courtesy title of Viscount Winchendon. The young lady appears to have been attractive in every way and was, we are told, " a person of extraordinary education ; " and although to marry at so ridiculously early an age would in the case of less matured natures have been doubtless a regrettable step, in this instance it might perhaps have been a safeguard from such snares and pit-

falls as exuberant youth is but too often fated to encounter. But Wharton was no ordinary youth, as will have been gathered. He was a husband because probably he was not able to satisfy his passion in any other way. The old Marquis must have viewed the matter with the mixed feelings of one who sees his offspring endowed with those qualities for which he had himself been notorious, although the result must have been very different from what he might have expected.

Unfortunately for both Lord and Lady Winchendon, the premature step proved anything but a safeguard against licentious excesses on the young husband's part ; and although for a short time he was passionately in love, it was not long before he found vent for his amorous propensities in other less regular directions. But this result cannot be said to have occurred through his own faults of temperament alone. His father, furious at the dislocation of his pet scheme—the marrying of his brilliant son to the daughter of some great and wealthy noble—insisted on a separation taking place almost immediately after the pair had been united ; and having done this and taken what steps he could to make the boy forget his bride, he seems to have taken the matter so much to heart that he died within a few weeks of the event, to be exact on the following 12th of April. Whether this circumstance actually caused his decease as has been suggested may be doubted. What it did

no doubt was to give the final blow to a constitution already suffering from the excesses of youth and the too juvenile conduct of advancing years. Before he died he made his will, and having in it appointed certain guardians for his prodigal, he added this paragraph : “ And I recommend it to my son to observe the advice of his Mother and Guardians and to endeavour by a dutiful and prudent behaviour to make the best amends he can for the false step he has made.”

The four guardians thus appointed were Lady Wharton, the 1st Marquis of Dorchester, the 3rd Earl of Carlisle, and Nicholas Lechmere, who afterwards became 1st Baron Lechmere. It was naturally the first who had the task of looking after the young Marquis—and a pretty difficult task she found it. There was, indeed, no holding in the young man who, cut off from the society of his lawful wife, did his best to console himself in other directions. “ The thin, slender and pretty tall gentleman,” as he is described by a contemporary,¹ found no little favour in the eyes of the local beauties, and the fact of his being a Marquis with at least potentially large possessions on which ready money could be raised were attributes of special advantage. It is from this period that a certain pastoral dialogue, interesting as being Wharton’s first known excursion into the realms of letters, dates. The protagonists are discreetly

¹ Thomas Hearne thus writes in July, 1715.

veiled under the names of Menalcas and Enosia, and the nine stanzas (and considering the author's age very good stanzas they are) are said to have been inspired by a certain married lady with whom the young Marquis had an intrigue.

Meanwhile the young wife was living separately, probably with her own people. There was thus a double reason why conduct which was becoming the talk of the countryside could not be allowed to continue. Lady Wharton's influence was as naught, and as a result of a consultation of the guardians it was determined to try the effect of foreign travel on the too susceptible young man. A certain M. Dusoul, a French Huguenot, was selected for the post, and he, with the optimism of ignorance, blandly accepted it. In the spring of 1716 the pair set out for Geneva, where it was arranged that they should reside in a religious institution in order that M. Dusoul might be fortified by other authority and the Marquis placed under a double control.

Had Lord Wharton been amenable and the scheme able to be carried out it is probable that the whole tenor of the young man's life would have been altered. But in those days continental travel was an undertaking undreamed of in these times, and instead of going to Geneva direct a sort of round tour was necessary to get there. In the first place our traveller proceeded to Hanover, and was not only kindly treated by the Landgrave of

Hesse, who made him various rich presents, but was introduced to Peter the Great, who happened to be staying at Herrenhausen at the time. From a contemporary record one learns that Wharton offered himself as a volunteer to Peter on one of the Czar's military expeditions ; and that he had already begun that career of extravagance for which he became famous is proved by the fact that he " lived very magnificently at Cassel ; had six Footmen, a running Footman, a Valet de Chambre, a secretary (for he will not allow People to call him his Governor¹), two sets of Coach-horses, etc." So writes Lady Cowper, and she adds : " All this is to be done on £1000 a year, which is his allowance. I am certain if he lives two years he will spend every farthing he has in the world." She was not far wrong.

M. Dusoul must have had a rather hectic time, one imagines. Assuming him to have been a conscientious man, he must have suffered constant anxiety and apprehension. He was supposed to be convoying a young noble of great possessions (although, at the time, limited income) to a sort of retreat where the latter would be kept within some bounds, and where he himself would be able to share his responsibility with more reverend signiors, and here he found himself blown about whither the Wharton mind listed, and treated with as little respect as were any of his charge's six

¹ This was M. Dusoul himself.

footmen. It was like the keeper of a dipsomaniac who finds his charge in possession of a cellar, and has not the requisite strength or authority to make him give up the key. Surely never did tutor or governor (what an irony is in the words !) find himself confronted with a more difficult problem. The boy (for he was but seventeen) was exhibiting the results of an education perfect in everything except a knowledge of its subject. Wharton had been kept hard at it by his father : he could spout you Virgil and Horace by the hour, but he had had no practical experience of the life which inspired either. Suddenly he was able to enjoy all the pleasures of which he had but hitherto only dreamed. His head, too, was turned by the adulation of the petty German Courts he visited. He knew that he had a great property and a great name, and he was by no means ready to restrict himself to the conduct his trustees had planned out for him or to the relatively exiguous income he was allowed.

If M. Dusoul ever wrote a diary (and put everything down) it would make suggestive reading. It would, however, be too pathetic. One can visualise the poor man daily trying to lure his charge onward to the calm reflective fastnesses of Geneva ; seeking him out in all sorts of unholy haunts ; losing him sometimes and living in an excess of anxiety until the prodigal returned from some adventure whose details he could hardly have set

down (even had they been imparted to him) in the virgin pages of his journals. How mad and bad and sad it all was ! But my Lord Wharton found it far too sweet to be willing to relinquish the first experience he had ever had of enjoying life.

However, by degrees, the ill-assorted pair did progress towards their destination. They reached indeed the Swiss frontier. But whether some memory of past delights was too potent, or the sight of the Alps too chilling to the hot-blooded young gentleman, certain it is that just as Dusoul thought he had succeeded in at last bringing this vessel of wrath into the safe harbourage of Calvin's city, he lost him. The untractable Wharton, after leading his tutor such a life as probably no tutor before or since experienced (Walpole says he would rouse him out of bed merely to borrow a pin, as an example of his—well, of his pin-pricks, I suppose), returned secretly post-haste to Paris and its variegated delights.

There he seems to have begun those intrigues with 'the Old Pretender' or King James III., which you will, that were to be further consolidated when he visited the prince's court at Avignon. We hear of him being much in the company of a certain Mr. Gwynne who, it would seem, acted as an intermediary ; of his dining with Lord Bolingbroke, whose Jacobite tendencies are well known ; and at the same time visiting the Duke of Leeds and talking vaguely of a dukedom and the Garter,

which could only have come from adherence to the reigning house. The fact is Wharton could be long serious about nothing ; he was the veriest weather-cock, and the winds of his fancy blew his ideas to each point of the compass in the most bewildering way. However, just at this moment the breeze had evidently set in for a time due south, and after a number of letters had passed between him and the Chevalier de St. George he set out from Paris, although not directly for Avignon. Indeed he did a more surprising thing still, he actually did go to see Dusoul at Geneva after all. It is not quite clear what the reason for this was. It has been suggested by Mr. Lewis Melville,¹ plausibly enough, that the ‘governor’ had written him a peremptory letter whose force was likely to be realised by Wharton inasmuch as Dusoul still held the money-bags ; on the other hand Wharton’s mercurial temperament may have prompted him to make some amends for his past conduct before embarking on behaviour still more outrageous—nothing indeed less than contemplating high treason to King George I. Anyhow, he arrived in Geneva, but he did not stay there long.

In the Buccleuch MSS. is a letter from Paris (September, 1716) to the Duke of Montagu, in which the writer remarks that : “ We have an account that Lord Wharton is returning ; he has purchased a young bear that he brings behind the

¹ *Philip, Duke of Wharton*, by Lewis Melville.

coach.'" Why? We shall see. One morning the much harassed Dusoul awoke to find a messenger standing by his bedside with a letter in one hand and (of all things in the world) a young bear led by a chain in the other. Starting up he tore open the missive, with the boy and the bear grinning at him, and read these words: "Being no longer able to bear with your ill-usage, I think proper to be gone from you; however, that you may not want company, I have left you a bear as the most suitable companion in the world that could be picked out for you."

It seems probable that Wharton had received what he wanted, and having eased his conscience (if he was burdened with one, which seems doubtful) and filled his purse, was again 'taking the road,' this time to Avignon.

On his way he stopped at Lyons, and from there addressed a long letter to the Jacobite Earl of Mar. In it he remarks how sensible he is of his correspondent's surprise "when you first received advice of my *return* to my duty," i.e. his sudden adherence to the cause of the Chevalier, and he expresses abundant determination to do everything in his power towards the reinstatement of that personage in his rights. In the postscript, however (notoriously the most pregnant part of a letter), he indicates that it is not only for the *beaux yeux* of the exile that he is taking such steps, and he is not above suggesting that the Garter shall be

his reward when the king comes to his own again. The poor old Marquis must have turned colour (if ghosts can) when this intelligence reached the Elysian Fields. Mary of Modena, who told Lord Mar that “ this young man writes and talks much better than most people can do at his age,” on reading Wharton’s letter with its concluding conditions wrote : “ I am charmed with Lord. Wharton’s letter to you, none can be better written or more loyal ; if the last lines had been wanting it would have been more generous and quite perfect, but where is the man in the world that is entirely so ? ”

It is not necessary here to enter into the intrigues that went on between Lord Wharton and the Chevalier and his adherents. The young man’s attitude was rather of a comic-opera character. He took up intrigue as he took up a mistress—for a temporary diversion ; and when that palled he turned his attention to something else. As we have seen, he set out for Avignon to see his new master, and when he got there he had a single interview at which he appears to have received the empty title of Duke of Northumberland,¹ and almost immediately returned to the more congenial atmosphere of Paris.

Among the Stuart Papers are many letters which passed between the irresponsible young Marquis

¹ It had become vacant by the death, on June 28th, 1716, of George Fitzroy (son of Charles II.), on whom it had been bestowed.

and Lord Mar, as well as the Chevalier himself ; and there is, besides, one in which our old friend Dusoul, writing from Geneva, endeavours to instil some sane ideas into the mind of his errant charge. There was another man who tried to do his share in the same direction — the Earl of Stair, then English ambassador in Paris, whom Wharton had not the least hesitation in visiting, probably with James's letters in his pocket. At one of these interviews Lord Stair (whose father, it will be remembered, had taken a discreditable part with his sovereign in connection with the Massacre of Glencoe) remarked to his guest that he hoped “ he would follow the illustrious example of fidelity to his Prince and love of his country set by his father ; ” to which Wharton coolly replied : “ As your Excellency had also a worthy and discerning father I hope that you will likewise imitate his example and tread in his footsteps.” It was a ready and obvious retort, but hardly one likely to make Wharton a welcome guest at the Embassy. Nor was a subsequent incident, which no doubt got duly reported to Lord Stair, of such a nature as to improve the relationship between the two. It is thus given by the author of the *Life of the Duke of Wharton*, 1731.

“ I shall mention here,” writes the biographer, “ one of his juvenile fancies, though I think it will rather manifest the giddiness of his temper than either his wit or discretion, and indeed was one of

the lowest that I have known in his character. It happened a young English surgeon who came to see practice in the famous hospitals of Paris, passing by his Excellency's home on the 10th of June at night, took the liberty to break the Ambassador's windows for no other reason but that there was no bonfire before his door. The author of this insult was taken and committed to the prison of Fort L'Evêque. This treatment of the young surgeon was resented by the Marquis, but he sought for no other satisfaction than to break the Ambassador's windows a second time, and accordingly he proposed the matter to an Irish Lieutenant-General in the service of France, a gentleman of great honour and of the first reputation for military virtue, to assist therein. The General could not help smiling at the oddness of the proposal, but with a great deal of good nature made him this answer, that he advised him by all means to give over the enterprise ; but that if his lordship was resolved to execute it, he begged he might be left out of the party, for it was a kind of making war that he had not been accustomed to.”

Although foiled in this direction Wharton seems to have done his best to irritate Lord Stair in other ways, and it was not unusual for him at the Ambassador's own table to drink the Chevalier's health openly, and even to send his servants to others of the guests to invite them to join in his treasonable libations. In other ways his manners

of life were of the most reckless and hair-brained description, and there were few forms of dissipation in which he did not indulge.

But like the Duke of Buckingham (in Dryden's description), Wharton was "everything by starts, and nothing long ;" and he soon tired of amazing the Parisians by his vagaries. On December 1st, 1716, we hear of his leaving the French capital on his return to England, and after being delayed at Calais by storms he landed at Dover on the following December the 5th. He was still labouring under his attack of Jacobite fever, and he writes Lord Mar that he was ready "to make one of twenty to proclaim James III. in Cheapside," although what good he thought it would do is a mystery. Needless to be said his offer was not accepted. But a pretty careful watch was kept on his actions, and whether in London or at Bath, whither he went soon after his arrival, Jacobite spies dogged his footsteps and duly reported to Avignon such of his actions as might seem to have a bearing on his protestations to support the lost cause.

The death of old Lady Wharton in the early part of 1717 gave him an increase of income, although he was unable to make use of it as being still under age. Another disability which this lack of years brought him was that it prevented him from sitting in the House of Lords, in which he no doubt felt he was competent to take a prominent

position and which would have given him further opportunities for exhibiting his Jacobite tendencies. Not being able to do this he continued his hectic career in other ways, and his cousin, George Lockhart of Carnworth, records in a letter that "he minds nothing but the pleasures of the place he resides in, of which he takes a full swing," and observes : "there are other strange contradictory stories related of him ; what to credit I know not, but I dread the worst ;" which being interpreted would appear to indicate that Lord Wharton had already begun to think of other things besides his proclaiming of James Stuart, although he had already received one reward (an empty one which he could not use) in the patent duly signed by James III. of his new title of Duke of Northumberland.



CHAPTER II

THE USE AND ABUSE OF LIFE

ONE of the most important things in the world to Wharton at this juncture was apparently the opportunity of finding a medium for his self-expression in the direction of oratory. Debarred by age from taking his seat in the English House of Lords, he bethought himself of the fact that among other titles he possessed those of Earl of Rathfarnham and Marquis of Catherlough, by right of which he could enter the Irish Upper House. He therefore determined to avail himself of this happy accident, and having had an interview with his three remaining guardians, Lords Dorchester and Carlisle and Mr. Lechmere, at which it was arranged that his debts should be paid, he crossed over to Dublin in the August of 1717 and towards the close of that month duly took his seat in the House of Lords, being introduced by the Earls of Kildare and Mount Alexander.

Addison duly received from Eustace Budgell a description of the ceremony, from which we learn

that on August 27th Wharton “ was introduced as Marquis of Carlow ” (so the longer word was phonetically spelt and pronounced) “ though he is not yet of age,¹ which is ye highest compliment could have been paid him. It is pretty remarkable that his Grace² and ye young Lord Hillsborough, who was introduced just after him, were ye only persons who spoke in ye House of Lords all that day. His Grace’s speech was thought by some not so very well timed, since ye design of it seemed to be to persuade ye House to address ye King, which they had before unanimously agreed to, but bating this his Grace spoke good grace, with a strong voice and good air, and in all probability, since he shows so early a desire to be a speaker, must one day make a considerable figure in Parliament.”

And for a time he did make a figure. He spoke often and well ; he acted on various committees, and his support of the Government showed that his Jacobite leanings had been but a flash in the

¹ Wharton once made this circumstance support his argument to his tenants, who at first refused to pay their rents direct to him as he was under age. “ How dare you say I am under age,” he retorted, “ when Parliament has declared that I am not.” The fact is, in some ways he was always under age to the end of his life, the money he extracted from his tenants going like water through his hands in the direction of riotous living or merely thoughtless extravagance.

² *Sic.*, and he is called Duke of Wharton by Budgell, although he was not created a Duke till January the 28th, 1718 (according to Doyle’s *Official Baronage*, usually a very reliable authority). Perhaps Budgell had heard of the Northumberland title and wrote this sarcastically.

pan. His wild oats, at least political, seemed to have been sown and the prodigal fairly reformed. What the Royal exile at Avignon thought of it, or the Earl of Mar, or Mary of Modena, who had once with no little difficulty lent or given the young man a sum of £2000, is a question. Perhaps on the whole they took it philosophically and preferred the open enmity of one so mercurial to the questionable advantage of his support.

On his journey to Ireland Wharton had been accompanied by Edward Young, the future author of the famous *Night Thoughts*, then in his thirty-seventh year. Wharton seems to have had a genuine regard for the poet, and he continued his patron and gave him money—so long as money and protection were his to bestow. It is probable that it was through Young that Wharton was first made acquainted with Swift ; in any case the Duke and the Dean not only met but became on terms of such intimacy that the latter did not hesitate on occasion to give his noble friend some wholesome advice : “ You have had some capital frolics, my Lord,” he once remarked to him, “ and let me recommend one to you. Take a frolic to be virtuous : take my word for it, that one will do you more honour than all the other frolics of your life.”

The association of Wharton with Swift and Young is a bright spot in his otherwise rudderless course of conduct. Of the former especially during

his Irish visit he saw much, and there is every reason to believe that the Dean, while recognising the wayward characteristics of his young friend, really admired his undoubted abilities and did his best to steady their uncertain application. With Young his friendship was of a deeper seated character. The poet introduces his patron into the *Night Thoughts* as Lorenzo, and slurs over Wharton's passion for all sorts of ill-regulated delights in the line

“To pleasure never was Lorenzo deaf ;”

while in the dedication of *The Revenge* he addresses his friend in that strain of adulation which was characteristic of that kind of composition, and which, did the reader know no better, might well lead him to suppose Wharton a pattern of all the virtues.

If, however, during his stay in Ireland the young Marquis could not truthfully be said to have earned such praise, at least he appears to have done nothing specially notorious, and politically he was so distinctly on the side of the angels (if King George and his ministers can be so described) that the Government decided to reward the returned prodigal with the fatted veal of a real Dukedom—that of Northumberland being but a calf with a very uncertain future. In consequence a patent was duly made out, and Philip, Marquis of Wharton, was raised to the ultimate step of the noble ladder on January the 28th, 1718.

Having thus secured what he wanted—and he was so clever that perhaps his coquetting with the Chevalier de St. George had never any other object than that of forcing the Government's hands to bribe him again into the loyalty he affected to have abandoned—his first step was to vote against his former friends in the Irish House of Lords ; his next to lose no time in shaking the dust of the distressful country (if its rain ever allows sufficient dust to accumulate) from his feet, and making his way to the fountain of honour at St. James's.

The event, as may be supposed, occasioned no little excitement ; and indeed there were plenty who regarded such a *volte-face* for what it was worth, and were sceptical of the endurance of such becoming sentiments in one whose inconsistencies were proverbial. However, that the powers that were had, or affected to have, no doubts on the subject, is evidenced by a passage in the patent of Duke-dom, which, reciting the services to the House of Hanover done by his father, proceeds : “ When we see the son of this great man forming himself by so worthy an example, and in every action exhibiting a lively resemblance to his father ; when we consider the eloquence which he has exerted with so much applause in the Parliament of Ireland and his turn and application even in early youth to the serious and weighty affairs of the public, we willingly decree him honours which are neither superior to his merits nor earlier than the

expectation of our good subjects." Surely our good subjects must have been surprised at having (quite unknown to themselves) harboured such sentiments! Wharton's action in voting against the Government after he had received this honour should have warned the Ministry of his consistent inconsistency, and they might have paraphrased the famous lines of Francis I.:

" Souvent *homme varie*
 Bien fou qui s'y fie."

Wharton duly arrived in England, and it is pleasant to be able to record that he almost immediately joined his wife and exhibited every sign of being deeply in love with her—"fond of her to distraction," is Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's phrase. For a time he remained in a more or less passive enjoyment of the domesticities and in savouring as it were the delights of his new dignity. In the March of the following year a son and heir was born, and everything pointed to a happy and prosperous future. But it is the tragedy, if also to some minds the welcome excitement, of life that one never knows what is going to happen next. The serenest sky may be suddenly overcast, the most perfect day may have a direful close. So it was in this instance.

A year had hardly elapsed before an outbreak of smallpox (that scourge of the eighteenth century) occurred in London, and it was to London that the Duke was called for the sittings of the House of

Lords.¹ Before leaving his place at Winchendon he gave his wife special injunctions not to follow him to the metropolis because of the epidemic. The Duchess was young and loving ; she had had experience of her husband's amatory and matrimonial exploits ; and whether she was suspicious that his orders had been given rather in order to allow him greater freedom, or whether she really could not bear his absence, certain it is that, disregarding his counsels, she allowed very little time to elapse before following him. Hardly had she arrived in London before the child was struck down by the smallpox, and in spite of everything that could be done succumbed to it on March the 1st, 1720. Furious at his loss and the disregard of his injunctions which had caused it, Wharton swore never to speak to his Duchess again. Whether he kept his word *au pied de la lettre* is not quite certain, but anyhow for all practical purposes the pair were no longer husband and wife, and the lady died, 'after a blameless life,' at her house in Gerrard Street, Soho, on April 14th, 1726.

The short time the Duke and Duchess had been together at Winchendon was the most reputable portion of the career of 'the infamous Duke,' as he was afterwards called. He attended to his estates ; he bred horses and trained them ; he won

¹ He was introduced by the Dukes of Kingston and Bolton on December the 21st, 1719, and one of the first things he did was to vote against the Government !

various races at Newmarket ; and altogether was quite the model of a ducal country gentleman. The death of his son and his separation from his wife brought about a complete reversion to his earlier gay and disreputable life. Always ready to shock the susceptibilities of the ‘ unco guid,’ he succeeded in disgusting those of far less strait-laced persons. He joined the notorious Hell Fire Club and was even elected president of that society, which horrified the more sober denizens of Hanover Square and scandalised the rustic inhabitants of river-lapped Medmenham. He delighted in the company of the most abandoned people, and, as we have seen earlier in this volume, even permitted himself to be on friendly terms with that abomination of desolation, Colonel Francis Charteris. He joined a club called the Schemers : “ Twenty very pretty fellows (the Duke of Wharton being president and chief director) have formed themselves into a committee of gallantry. They call themselves *Schemers* and meet regularly three times a week to consult on gallant schemes for the advantage and advancement of that branch of happiness. . . . they have the envy and curses of the old and ugly of both sexes,” writes Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to her sister Lady Mar, on October 31st, 1723. He frequented the notorious Spiller’s Head in Clare Market, where the gay young men and night-birds of the period were wont to assemble, and where the most heterogeneous throng hob-

nobbed with each other, and indecency and blasphemy were hardly excused by the wit which often informed them.

This haunt has received pictorial immortality, for Hogarth reproduced it and some of its frequenters in his picture entitled *Oysters, or St. James's Day*,¹ in which the famous Bab Selby, the oyster woman *à la mode*, is shown opening oysters for Wharton ; among others represented being Dr. Garth and Betterton and Polly Fenton and a certain Fig, brother of the once well-known boxer, who seems to have been a sort of henchman of the Duke, accompanying him on his drunken exploits when this lively member of the House of Lords was accustomed to perambulate the town knocking people up (and down) at all hours, breaking windows, and generally behaving like a young cub who requires a good thrashing. Those were the days when the 'Mohocks' and the 'Tumblers' and the 'Sweaters' terrorised London and were dreaded and reprobated by all law-abiding citizens. The names of the members of these fraternities have not descended to us, but we know that they included many young men of family and high position, and there is little doubt that his Grace of Wharton not infrequently took a part in exploits which were very much after his own heart ;

¹ There is a description of a somewhat similar picture, portraying Covent Garden, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for Feb. 1817, by C. Richardson, who then owned the work.

certainly a member of the Hell Fire Club and the Schemers would have been capable of most of the audacities practised by the Mohocks and the Tumblers.

Wharton now spent most of his time in London, amazing all and sundry by the facile way in which he turned from the serious occupation of making speeches (and good speeches) in the House of Lords to the anything but serious frolics in which the safety of men and the good name of women ran an equal chance of being adversely affected. His amatory exploits were so numerous that it has been stated that Richardson took him as the model for the Lovelace of his *Clarissa*. Seward states so much in his *Anecdotes*; but too much reliance need not, I think, be placed on this statement. Lovelace might have been inspired by any number of young men of fashion, and because the part happens to fit Wharton at one period of his career it does not follow that he was the original. In any case the Duke had been dead some seventeen years when *Clarissa* first appeared in 1748.

When Wharton was not in London he was either at Winchendon or running horses at Newmarket, where he betted with the same recklessness that he introduced into most of his occupations, losing on one occasion, it is said, no less than £13,000.¹ Indeed his extravagance was appalling and soon made marked inroads even in what was then the

¹ Lady Cowper's Letters, May, 1720.

large income of some £16,000 a year, of which he was the master. His racing predilections were an inheritance from his father, who, however, had run a far more successful stable. However, if Wharton was not so lucky as his sire he was equally enthusiastic, and he has himself left some verses on the subject—*A Song made at York Races*—which were buried among the Stowe MSS. until Mr. Lewis Melville printed them.

Wharton was fond of celebrating his exploits in rhyme, which came easily to him. He once engaged in an Homeric drinking bout at the seat of his relative, Sir Christopher Musgrave, the famous Eden Hall. This effusion,¹ which was based on the celebrated ballad of *Chevy Chace*, is entitled *A True and Lamentable Ballad called the Earl's Defeat*. It is preceded by a line from Milton :

“On both sides slaughter and gigantic deeds,”
and runs to twenty-eight four-line stanzas, the first being as follows :

“God prosper long from being broke
The Luck of Eden-Hall ;
A doleful drinking bout I sing,
There lately did befall ;”

and a certain ‘Earl Harold’ being one of the defeated. The reference to the Luck of Eden Hall is interesting in this connection, for, as most people

¹ From an MS. note by Mitford in his copy of *Whartoniania* it would seem that this poem was really written by Philip Lloyd, a literary henchman of the Duke.

know, that talisman consists of a crystal goblet supposed to have been taken away by one of the Musgraves from a fairy banquet. The distich concerning it runs :

" If this glass do break or fall,
Farewell the luck of Eden Hall."

Now we are told that when at this house Wharton was wont to catch up the goblet and recklessly toss it into the air, catching it again as it descended. On one occasion, however, having no doubt drunk deeper than usual, he missed the glass, and it would have been shattered had not the alert butler rushed to the rescue and saved it before it reached the ground.

This was but a characteristic incident of the Duke's attitude towards life. Metaphorically he was always tossing up his luck in this irresponsible fashion, and often enough there was no vigilant henchman at hand to avert disaster. His affairs had by now become inextricably confused. He had lost an immense sum in the South Sea scheme, a sum which, according to his own statement, amounted to no less than £120,000 ; his debts must have been enormous, and in a certain satirical effusion of the day, entitled *The Duke of Wharton's Whens*,¹ a long list of improbabilities is given as likely to be converted into actual facts when his Grace is able to discharge his liabilities. It is a

¹ The lines were probably written by Wharton himself ; in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit* is a very similar production also ascribed to him.

curious catalogue, and as shedding light on various contemporary persons and events is worth transcribing :

“ When gentle Thames rolls back her silver streams,
And German wit adorns our British dames,
When Walpole’s honest and Newcastle’s wise,
Or England’s senate Cowper’s voice despise,
When Young to prostitute his vow shall cease,
And Townshend’s counsel bless the land with peace,
When Dodington of arrogance is cur’d,
And all his formal nonsense is endur’d,
When Wharton’s just and learns to pay his debts,
And reputation dwells at Madame Brett’s,
When Molly How shall dare commence a saint,
And Hervey cease to wear such loads of paint,
When Maids of Honour think of reputation,
And pass for really maids throughout the nation,
When Carter’s modesty shall show a shyness,
To any other but His Royal Highness,
When on the Prince one single grace shall smile
Or honour cease to sparkle in Argyle,
When manners are reformed by Billy Vaughan,
Or Clark, thy elbow cease to itch at lawn,
When Chartres shall the laws of God dispense,
And Melsington, one word of common-sense,
When poet Young for judgment we admire,
And her fat Highness shall excite desire,
When the smooth sycophant shall smile in Carey,
And Clio be as light as Lady Mary,
When Bolton is for wit and courage fam’d,
Or Rutland for extravagance is blam’d,
When Dalkeith’s lady unaffected grows,
Or humble Essex wit or honour shows,
When Poultney’s wife shall three half-crowns refuse,
And Stanhope’s Courtly genius not abuse,

When modest Manners no more scruples shows,
Who hide their faces and their bums expose,
When Harcourt's honest, Atterbury meek,
And Pope translates the *Odyssey* from Greek,
When Halifax shall gain his uncle's fame,
Or any other merit than his name,
When Bolton's duchess draws no scandal on her,
Or our Cadogan values points of honour,
When the Vice-Chamberlain dries up his sores,
And Chetwynd shall disband his troop of whores,
When Biddy Knowles's maidenhead is found,
And Lady Drogheda again is sound,
When South Sea Schemes in England is forgot,
Or Berkeley has one tender, graceful thought,
Then, Celia, shall my constant passion cease,
And my poor suffering heart shall be at peace.”¹

In the spring of 1722 Wharton does seem to have made some effort ‘to pay his debts.’ The fact is he had so involved himself by extravagance and rash speculation that there was nothing for it but to do so; and as a step towards this desirable end he left London and took up his abode at a comparatively small house at Twickenham called The Grove, which had been previously occupied by Sir William Humble. He determined to remain here for seven years and to restrict his annual expenditure to £2000. Here he was a neighbour of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu at Saville House, as well

¹ In Toland's *Invitation to Dismal to dine with the Calves' Head Club*, which is to be found in Hawkesworth's edition of Swift's *Works* (vol. ix. p. 181), and which is probably from Swift's pen, there is in the enumeration of the probable guests this line: “W—rt—n, unless prevented by a wh—e.”

as of Pope at his villa, and Lady Suffolk, Queen Caroline's "Good Howard," at Marble Hill. It has been suggested that it was the presence of the first named that attracted Wharton to this then rural retreat. They were certainly very intimate —too intimate to suit Pope's jealous nature—and the fact has been given as the reason for the poet's famous quarrel with Lady Mary.

This period was perhaps the most tranquil of Wharton's life. He gave himself up with easy adaptability to a relatively calm existence for a time, and here it was that he produced that publication known as *The True Briton*, in which he took up an uncompromising attitude against the Government and championed the cause of Atterbury. *The True Briton* was published twice a week, beginning on June 3rd, 1723, and closing on February 17th, 1724. It ran to 74 numbers, and, as Nathan Drake says, "displays abilities which might have been rendered serviceable to his country, but which debauchery and want of all principle either stifled or directed into a wrong channel."¹

At Twickenham, Pope tells us, Wharton "tried various kinds of literary activity." Some of it, as for instance this very *True Briton* and various lampoons in *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, was directed against Sir Robert Walpole, whom the Duke never tired of vituperating; and his "puerile malice," to use the late Thomas Seccombe's

¹ *Essays on Periodicals*, 1809.

phrase, induced him to place libels on his neighbouring poet in Lady Mary's hands, and even to parody some of that lady's own effusions. It should be remembered that the Duke was only twenty-five at this time, and if much of his behaviour was like that of a schoolboy, it cannot be denied that that schoolboy was one of remarkable ability. Some of the papers in *The True Briton* prove this incontestably, and it was shown in another direction.

Wharton had been for some years on friendly terms with Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester. The bond between two such opposite characters was undoubtedly that Jacobite sympathy which was so marked a characteristic of the Bishop and with which Wharton was as it were continually flirting. Atterbury's activities in James Stuart's cause could not be overlooked by the Government, and when certain incriminating correspondence was intercepted, a Bill of Pains and Penalties was introduced against him in the House of Commons. Atterbury did nothing, reserving his defence to such time as the matter should be brought forward in the Upper House. In due course this occurred, and it was in the debate on the second reading of the bill, on May 15th, 1723, that the Duke of Wharton rose and made his great speech in defence of his friend.

A characteristic anecdote is told of Wharton in connection with this incident. It is said that he

obtained an interview with Walpole at Chelsea on the day previous to his making his speech, and that he then led the Prime Minister to suppose that he was anxious to regain the favour of the Court, and therefore intended to support the bill. Sir Robert, never dreaming that a trap was being laid for him, went with the Duke over all the points which the Government intended to make against Atterbury, and, in a word, revealed his plan of campaign. Horace Walpole, who records this, adds that "the Duke was very thankful, returned to town, passed the night in drinking, and without going to bed went to the House of Lords, where he spoke *for* the Bishop, recapitulating in the most masterly manner and answering all that had been urged against him."

There is no doubt that Wharton's speech was a very masterly one, and if it did not succeed in saving the Bishop from being deprived of his offices and being banished from the kingdom, it made a very great impression on its auditors, many of whom must have wondered how a young man capable of such a sustained effort of eloquence and logical presentment of his case could be satisfied otherwise to fritter away his time and his wealth on people and objects so far beneath his station and his abilities. But this was really the very essence of the Duke's character : he could on occasion make a soul-stirring oration ; he could write eloquently sometimes, as *The True Briton* proves ;

and yet he turned to the companionship of Charteris and the inditing of silly ephemeral lampoons with an equal facility and an equal zest. He was indeed an eighteenth-century Zimri.

Dr. King's account of Wharton at this time is both interesting in itself and confirms what others have said of him : " The late Duke of Wharton had very bright parts, a great vivacity, a quick apprehension, a ready wit and a natural eloquence, and all improved by an excellent education. I do not believe that any young nobleman on his first entrance into the House of Lords hath appeared with such advantage. His speech in defence of Dr. Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, was heard with universal applause and admiration, and was indeed not unworthy of the oldest and most accomplished senator or the most able and eloquent lawyer in either House of Parliament. So that he might have promised himself the first employments in the kingdom : and he had no small share of ambition. But he defeated his own designs. He had no prudence or economy, and he wanted personal courage. The last, however, would probably have been concealed if he had been a sober man. But he drank immoderately and was very abusive and sometimes very mischievous in his wine, so that he drew on himself frequent challenges which he would never answer. On other accounts likewise his character was become very prostitute." ¹

¹ *Anecdotes of his Own Times.*

When Atterbury left England Wharton not only saw him off but presented him with a sword (a significant kind of present even to an unfrocked bishop), on the blade of which two mottoes were inscribed, one : "Draw me not without reason," and the other : "Put me not up without honour." Hearne, who records this, gives a description of Atterbury's departure, which took place from the Tower on June 18th, 1723. One wonders if the sword which Wharton presented to his friend was the identical one which he had once found such difficulty in drawing, an incident he himself has recorded in one of his ballads, as having happened when on a certain occasion he was seized by the guard in St. James's Park :

"The Duke drew out half his sword
 the guard drew out the rest."

We have seen in the account of his friend Charteris what a repugnance he had to a bare blade and the extraordinary effect the sight of one had on him. But Wharton did not confine his attentions to his departing friend by merely saying good-bye and giving him something he was never likely to use ; he wrote a poem which he called *The Banishment of Cicero*, in which he apostrophises the ex-bishop as :

"The bulwark of the Roman State,
 In act, in thought, a god,"

while Sir Robert Walpole, classically veiled as Clodius, is described as :

"A short-lived Monster of the land."

The young Duke, having thus liberated his soul, returned to his Twickenham retreat and the writing of *The True Briton*, an occupation diversified with reflections, one is to suppose, on that short and hectic career of thoughtlessness and extravagance which had reduced him to the necessity of retrenchment. His retrospections must have been mixed ones. For instance, there were a few on which he could look back with complacency, as when he gave Young £2000 for his poem on *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion*, which he once said was the best bargain he ever made in his life, and, considering it is one of the few creditable things he did, was a truer remark than he perhaps realised. He always had a passion for writers and writing. It is one of the curious complexities of his character. Indeed he was looked upon somewhat as a patron, and we know that Mrs. Centlivre dedicated one of her plays to him, and Gabriel Roussillon his translation of one of Vertot's *Revolutions*.

Once, too, our amazing Duke affected to become a benefactor to a university, and actually entered into an engagement to find the money for a portion of the rebuilding of All Souls, Oxford. In this instance it would seem that he expected to receive a return (he generally had an eye to a *quid pro quo*) in the shape of an honorary degree; but although the dons of All Souls took the money and perpetuated the ducal benefaction by an inscription to "the most noble Prince Philip, Duke of

Wharton," in one of the quadrangles, they drew the line at conferring academic honours on such a scapegrace.

Wharton, who was nothing if not 'various,' about this time became a Freemason and was in 1722-3 elected Grand Master, and even so long after as 1728, when he was in Madrid, showed his interest in the body by founding a foreign lodge in direct association with the Grand Lodge in England. That was another matter on which he might look with satisfaction during his more reflective moments.

But there were other matters which could hardly have caused him gratification to remember when in sober mood. His drinking bouts ; his consorting with Charteris, even if, as Pope says, they only did consume citron ; his Hell Fire Club audacities ; even that tremendous onslaught on Lord Stanhope concerning the South Sea Company, when he compared the minister with Sejanus and launched such a philippic at his head that in replying Stanhope in his anger broke a blood vessel and died the next day. His disregard of his neglected wife and his too anxious regard for the wives of others must also have been ghosts not easily laid.

In the *Additional MSS.* is a poem entitled *The Duke of Wharton's Ballad*, which indicates certain of his vices :

"No more of Politics let's talk ;
What is't to me,

Who lately got or made a baulk
In ye South Sea ?

Have we dull peace,
Or do we fight,
Nothing can echo the delight
Of a full glass.

Have we an upstart made a lord
We'll ne'er repine,
So that my cellars are well stored
With good French wine.

Let others follow statesmen's whimsies,
And cool their heels,
Or go in sowerd at St. James
To Leicester Fields.

Careless am I, let who will reign
On Britain's isle ;
Nothing in life shall give me pain
So Mordaunt smile."

This reflects the Duke's occasional attitude towards life ; but at various times (when he happened to think of it) it did, as we have seen and shall see, matter very much to him who reigned in Britain, inasmuch as he never quite got over his passion for James III., even if he occasionally coquettred with George I. Indeed Wharton's political vagaries were part and parcel of his character. He turned his coat so often that he must have been a source of perpetual anxiety and surprise to the House of Lords, where no one could be sure on which side he was going to throw in his lot. Yet he was so often brilliant in speech and so resourceful

in debate that he could not be listened to with indifference. Sometimes he was witty enough to demolish an antagonist by a phrase. Once when a bishop proposed to divide his remarks under a dozen headings, he sprang up and craved the attention of the House for a moment, as what he had to say could only pertinently be said before the bishop spoke. "A drunken fellow," he said, "was passing by St. Paul's as the clock was striking twelve. He counted the strokes, and at the close he looked up to the clock and exclaimed, 'Damn you, why couldn't you give us all that at once!'" Needless to say his ecclesiastical Grace did not make his hydra-headed ovation.

He was more dramatic on another occasion when a discussion arose on the Royal Proclamation against blasphemous and scandalous clubs, chiefly aimed at the notorious Hell Fire Club, of which, as we have seen, he was at one time a prominent member. He had the audacity to say he could not support the bill because he considered it *antagonistic to Holy Scripture*, and he pulled out a Bible and proceeded to defend his remarks by reading passages from it, and making St. Peter and St. Paul as it were authorities *in support* of the proceedings of the club!

At the very time when Wharton was thus appearing in the House of Lords he was carrying on a treasonable correspondence with the Chevalier de St. George and his adherents, and he is even said

on one occasion to have gone to one of his estates in Yorkshire, and there, having assembled the villagers, to have drunk openly to the health of James III. and forced the country people to do likewise.¹ Whether there be any truth in this it is certain that Wharton, who had a passion for notoriety—for even his friend Young writes :

“ Lorenzo’s sick, but when Lorenzo’s seen ;
And, when he shrugs at public business, lies”—

was ready to do anything that might draw attention to himself.

It has been suggested, with no little reason, that as the Duke’s financial affairs had now come to a climax, there was nothing for it but that he should live abroad, and that he considered he could do so with the importance which he craved only by identifying himself definitely with James III. He no doubt thought, too, that monetary assistance would mark the Royal exile’s gratitude ; for Wharton always had an *arrière pensée* of self aggrandisement in his political tergiversations. Although on settling at Twickenham he had restricted his expenditure to £2000 a year, there is little doubt that the Duke never kept within this limit, and fresh debts were gradually incurred. To meet these he was obliged to sell his Rathfarnham estate. This he disposed of for £62,000 to the Right Hon. William Connolly, Speaker of the Irish House of

¹ See a letter from Lord Lonsdale to James Lowther, September 26th, 1723, in the Lowther MSS.

Commons. The proceeds of this transaction enabled him again to face his creditors, but three years had only elapsed before he was obliged to raise more money. This he did by selling Winchendon to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and by parting with his picture gallery (including his family portraits¹) to Sir Robert Walpole. He also sold certain property to Colonel Charteris as we have seen, and in 1730 (to anticipate a little) his Westmoreland estates were purchased by Walpole.

In 1725 the Duke estimated his debts at £70,000, and although many sops had been given to his creditors they were still so clamorous that a receiver had to be appointed to administer what was left of his possessions. It was arranged that Wharton should receive £1200 a year until all his debts were paid. Here then we find this amazing young man whose talents were of the brightest, whose fortunes and position had been of the highest, reduced to relative penury by the time he was twenty-seven. In six years he had succeeded in dissipating the better part of a great estate, and all he had to show for the advantages he had inherited was a useless step in the peerage and the memory of one rhetorical effort in a lost cause.

¹ Among them was Vandyck's marvellous portrait of Lord Wharton. This was lent many years since to one of the Old Masters' Exhibitions at Burlington House by the Hermitage Gallery, Petrograd, where all the Walpole pictures are, they having been purchased *en bloc* by Catherine the Great for £40,000.

No wonder Pope called him the scorn and wonder of his day.

The need for retrenchment was an excellent reason for Wharton's leaving England, but there is no doubt whatever—indeed letters which passed between them and are extant prove as much—that he now determined to espouse openly the cause of James III. Having made his last speech in the House of Lords on the question of Lord Macclesfield's impeachment for corrupt practices, which came up in the May of 1725, he left the country at the beginning of the following July and landed at Rotterdam on the 3rd of that month. He had left his Duchess behind him. He had so neglected her since the death of his son that his absence made possibly very little difference to the ill-used lady, who did not in any case long survive his departure, she dying, as I have before stated, in a house in Gerrard Street, Soho, on April 14th, 1726.



CHAPTER III

HIS LAST PERVERTED YEARS

WHARTON went to the Continent quite openly ; the state of his affairs gave him every excuse for doing so. Whether the Government had its suspicions of an ulterior motive underlying his action is not clear. Even had it known, however, that he was about to throw in his lot with the uncrowned king it would probably have made very little difference. The Duke at home and posing as the candid friend was a greater nuisance than the Duke abroad in open rebellion. His name was largely discredited, and in the direction in which he might have been formidable he was now harmless, for he had no money and was only one more of the many who congregated round the Royal exile and did his cause more harm than good. One does not suppose that Walpole was much perturbed at anything Wharton was likely to do or say, and one cannot imagine any sleepless nights on account of this last escapade disturbing the tranquillity of Downing Street or Houghton.

The Duke's first objective was Vienna. 'His Majesty,' as he invariably addresses the exiled Prince, had suggested his stopping in Paris on the way in order that he might confer with Atterbury, then living in that city ; but Wharton regarded this as hazardous and likely "to alarm the enemy," as he says in a letter to his new master, and he therefore made his way directly to the Austrian capital, where his mission was to persuade the Emperor at least to countenance the Chevalier's cause, even if he could not be persuaded actively to support it.

There is no necessity here to enter into details regarding Wharton's traitorous connection with the Royal exile. The letters which passed between him and James and Atterbury are to be found in the Stuart papers. Suffice it to say that Wharton arrived in due course in Vienna and was there received very graciously by the Emperor Charles VI. He appears to have carried through his mission with as much success as it was in the nature of such negotiations to meet with, which, to tell the truth, was not much¹ ; but he was too restless to remain long anywhere or to concentrate for any length of time on anything ; besides which

¹ Peter Wentworth, writing to his brother on January 25th, 1720, says : " I am told the Duke of Weston (*sic*) . . . has been very busy at Vienna, informing them of the state of the nation, which if true is horrid for any Englishman to be guilty of. A man may be disengaged by some particular people, but that he should carry his resentment so far as to do anything that might tend to the ruin of his country . . . "

he was a thirsty soul, and his indulgences in the bottle, which were duly reported to Rome, may have caused his master to doubt both the capacity and the prudence of his agent. However this may be, Wharton was commanded to go to Madrid, where he received certain not very clearly defined 'marks of confidence' from the King, Philip V., and was soon after called to Rome. There James III. invested him with the Garter, for which he had so long hankered, on March 5th, 1726, and there he received instructions and credentials which enabled him to return to the Spanish capital as a recognised ambassador of the Royal exile.

The moving spirit in Spain at that moment was the famous minister Ripperda, who was quite willing to support an enemy of the British Government, and who while preparing for war with this country was with characteristic duplicity speaking our ministers fair. All sorts of mysterious negotiations went on between the two Dukes, and for a time Wharton was quite in his element as a person of diplomatic importance (at least in his own eyes) and as an enemy of the existing *régime*.

For a time Walpole and Stanhope, although thoroughly conversant with everything that was going on at Madrid, did not think it worth while to take any steps in the matter. But a report made by Benjamin Keene, then British Consul in the Spanish capital, as to Wharton's calmly appearing in his presence wearing his Star and Garter

and boasting that he was Duke of Northumberland and James III.'s Prime Minister, could not be so easily ignored. A warrant was therefore issued on May 2nd, 1726, commanding the Duke's immediate return to England. His reply was to throw the document out of the window of his coach, in which he happened to be when it was handed him, and forthwith to mature a scheme for James's invasion of England, a scheme whose every detail was duly communicated to the British Government. But Wharton's sojourn at Madrid was not destined to be wholly occupied by political intrigues. Perhaps for a time he had had enough of interviews with Ripperda; anyhow he did a thing which he had not done since he ran off with Miss Holmes as a boy: he fell quite seriously in love.

As we have seen, his Duchess had died in the previous April and he was free to marry again. With all his vagaries and unstable character he was after all a Duke of high lineage and, as such, a *parti* for match-making ladies; and it is said that that most inveterate of the species, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, made proposals to him on behalf of her granddaughter, whose fortune was a large one. Wharton might have been willing to take the lady had the money been free for his own use, but when he found that it was strictly tied up he would have nothing to do with the scheme.

Another reason, and a more creditable one, has been suggested for his refusal, and that was the

fact of his having lost his heart to a certain Miss O'Beirne, the daughter of an Irish exile, Colonel O'Beirne, at that time living in Madrid and acting as one of the Queen of Spain's Maids of Honour. The young lady has been described as being "not only very handsome but a woman of lively wit, extreme good sense, and mistress of everything that could form the agreeable;" in a word, far too good for her volatile wooer. Miss O'Beirne possessed all the advantages except monetary ones. Her father was dead, her mother subsisted on a pension from the Spanish Court, she herself had nothing but her salary as Maid of Honour, her extreme good sense and her undoubted beauty. The Duke possessed £1200 a year, with little prospect, the bulk of his property having gone to satisfy his creditors, of its ever being increased; his dukedoms (for what one of them was worth); his Garter (which was worth nothing at all); and his *beaux yeux*, from which dissipation must have ravished no little of the lustre.

The idea of such a marriage was a mad one, and so her Majesty of Spain regarded it. Miss O'Beirne had given her consent conditionally on Wharton's obtaining that of her Royal mistress. And here the trouble began, for in spite of protestations and even tears, nothing would induce the Queen to be a party to what she regarded as the beginning of "inextricable misfortunes." A better reason no doubt was the fact that the Duke was a Protestant

and his *inamorata* a Roman Catholic, and the Queen's obduracy may have had the ulterior purpose of throwing Wharton into the arms of the Romish faith. The Duke was not the man to allow such a trifle to stand between him and his desires, desires which had already resulted in his becoming really ill ; and although he had in June sworn¹ that he would adhere to his original faith, in the following month he was duly received into the Roman Catholic Church.¹

The Queen, moved by the entreaties of both parties, complacent at the recovery of an errant sheep to the true fold, and perhaps sympathising with a passion that had apparently brought one of its victims almost to death's door, relented, and on July 26th, 1726, the marriage took place. Having thus attained his heart's desire the Duke carried off his bride to Rome. But Wharton had now fallen back into his evil ways. We hear no more for a time of political intrigues, but of drinking bouts ; and his disorderly conduct, while it must have horrified his new Duchess, scandalised the Holy City to such an extent that at last he received a hint that he must leave either by his own volition or, failing that, at the orders of the authorities. It was an ignominious *finale* to his position as *confidante* and, as he himself termed it, Prime

¹ Cull (or one of his minions) wrote a scurrilous set of verses entitled *On the Duke of Wharton's renouncing the Protestant Religion*, the MS. of which is in the British Museum.

Minister to the King in exile. But probably he did not care much. His was not the nature to be greatly perturbed by public opinion ; so long as he amused himself in his own way, whether that way was treachery to his lawful king or indulgence in women and wine, the world, for all he seemed to care, might talk as it would.

However, circumstances were too strong for him in Rome, and he was obliged to depart. He sailed away quite light-heartedly to Barcelona, accompanied by his wife, to whom he had already proved faithless, and with no further commands from the Royal exile, who had begun to realise that even although his partisan had formally resigned his title of Duke of Wharton there was no reliance to be placed on his actions, and that the Jacobite cause was being done more harm than good by such an adherent.

It so happened that at this moment (1727) the Spaniards were contemplating the siege of Gibraltar in order to wrest that stronghold from the British. Here then was an opportunity for our Duke to show his inveterate hatred of King George's Government. He had done many and strange things during his short career, but he had never been a soldier, and unreflecting as ever, he immediately offered his services to the King of Spain as a volunteer. The offer was accepted and he was placed on the staff of the Count de Las Torres, who was in command of the operations.

Opportunities were given him of which, had he been endowed with any sense, he might have taken excellent advantage, but the tale of his exploits indicates that he was foolhardy rather than really courageous, and as an example of his way of fighting the following may be given as at least characteristic :

"The day before yesterday, the Duke of Wharton insisted on going to a battery to show his Garter-Riband, crying out a thousand times 'Long live the Pretender,'¹ and using a quantity of bad language. They represented to him repeatedly that he ought to withdraw, but he refused to do so. At last he was struck by a piece of shell on the toe. He had been drinking brandy, otherwise perhaps he would have been wiser."² One may reasonably doubt whether without the stimulant of strong waters he would have done anything of the kind. That wound in the toe was really a godsend for Wharton. It enabled him to withdraw with less discredit from Gibraltar than he had from Rome ; and when he returned to Madrid the King, probably with the tongue in his cheek (if so vulgar a neologism may be predicated about so august a person), congratulated him on his prowess and made him a colonel.

Whatever amusement Wharton may have found in playing at war and committing high treason by

¹ It is of course incredible that he should have used these words.

² See Townshend MSS.

doing so must have received a rude awakening when he learnt, as he did shortly after, that the British Government, long suffering as it had been, was determined to take drastic action and proposed to impeach him for high treason, inasmuch as he had acted with King George's enemies. That he really was perturbed at this quite natural result of his treachery and foolhardiness is shown by the fact that he drew up and published a sort of manifesto giving his reasons for what he called "espousing the causes of his Royal Majesty King James III." in a letter to his friends in Great Britain and Ireland. It is a long document in which he talks of being "imbued with principles," which alone is sufficient to show that if cognisant of anything he certainly was not of his own variable and weathercock-like character.

Whether Wharton thought that by the publication of these articles of faith he would be the better able to convince his Royal master of his sincerity and so regain the favour lost by his behaviour in Rome, is not quite apparent. In any case he determined to follow it up by a visit to the exiled Court, and, having obtained leave from his regiment, he wrote to Prince James, who was then at Parma, suggesting that he should join the Royal headquarters. After having received one rebuff which he really did not or affected not to understand, he obtained permission for an audience, and in May, 1728, he set out for Parma. A letter



PRINCE JAMES STUART.

[*face p. 224.*]

which he subsequently wrote to the Prince indicates that while his reception was amicable it was not exactly warm, and he must at last have realised (although his temperament made it difficult for him to do so) that the Royal exile did not intend to make further use of him. As may be imagined he was furious at what he regarded as lack of gratitude, and he promptly left Italy and betook himself to Lyons. There he learnt that the charge of high treason against him had been actually promulgated and that he was thus cut off both from the Court of the King *de jure* (as he had affected to consider him) and the King *in esse* (whose power he at last felt).

Wharton was a trimmer with a difference. As we have seen, he cast in his lot indifferently with Whigs and Tories, with the Constitutional head of the State and James III., and he was again to exhibit his changeful capabilities by making overtures for the King's pardon of his many misdemeanours. As the King George now on the throne was the second of that name, it appeared to the Duke a quite sufficient reason to claim that he had broken with James Stuart after his Majesty's accession. This event took place on June 11th, 1727, and it was not Wharton's lack of traitorous intrigue since then that had caused the rupture. However, to such a mind as his the excuse was good enough, and this was the excuse he made for seeking a *rapprochement* in a letter he

wrote to Horatio Walpole, then British Ambassador in Paris. This missive, dated June 28th, 1728, was despatched from Lyons, and in due course Wharton arrived in Paris and had an interview with the Ambassador.

At that meeting the Duke expressed contrition and gratitude to the Government for not proceeding against him as he deserved, according to Walpole's own account sent to the Duke of Newcastle; so I suppose the matter of the high treason charge had been allowed to drop, unless Wharton calmly assumed as much without any grounds for doing so. But as if even when he did blunder into propriety some itch made him spoil it by doing something uncalled for, he calmly told Walpole at the close of the interview that he intended paying a visit to Atterbury, who was then in Paris. "The Ambassador could not help smiling at so odd a declaration, because he (Wharton) must know that such a correspondence was made felony by the same law that sent that prelate abroad. He answered him modestly that if his Grace had a design to pay that prelate a visit there was no occasion to tell him of it. Thus they parted without ever seeing one another again, and the Duke went and dined with the prelate accordingly."¹

At this point in Wharton's life an opportunity presented itself for his being pardoned and rehabilitated in something like his original dignity,

¹ See *Memoirs of Philip, Duke of Wharton* (1731), vol. i. p. 25.

although to be sure that dignity was likely to be shorn of that solidity which ample financial resources confer. And yet even his monetary prospects were capable of being greatly improved. The British Government, with a clemency characteristic of its chief, Walpole, agreed to grant him a full pardon on the simple condition that he should come to England and throw himself on the King's mercy. His security was guaranteed, and it was further agreed that he should be put in possession of his remaining estates which, having been at last freed from encumbrances, were worth at least £6000 a year. All he had to do was to return and send a submissive letter to George II. But this he refused to do ; and in spite of all the arguments and assurances of two of his friends who had been sent to Rouen (where he had now established himself) by Sir Robert Walpole, he persisted in refusing to make any apology whatever. He seemed to have forgotten that it was he who first made overtures through Horatio Walpole in Paris. The assumption is that he expected to be received with open arms—he a profligate, a turncoat, and a traitor. For he had been all three, besides being a disgrace to his order and an ‘awful example’ to all and sundry.

But one has no patience with a man who is both a fool and a rogue, who has not the courage of his convictions for five minutes together, who is willing to serve any master so long as that master may

regard him as a sort of indispensable adjunct to his glory, who possessed all the weaknesses and pettinesses of a child combined with a child's want of reflection and a child's accesses of passion and mischievousness. He suddenly began to remember that his honour and reputation (the connection of such words with such a character as his sounds comic) would be hurt by his making an avowal of his faults and seeking forgiveness for them. His whole life had been a negation of the terms, but he remembered them as one remembers far off things, and with an obstinacy rather new to his temperament he determined to make them the last plank in his platform.

That curious possession of the Duke's—his honour—did not prevent him from again making overtures to the Jacobites, as we learn from a letter sent by the well-informed Horatio Walpole to the Duke of Newcastle so soon after the events related as August the 14th, 1728. But the Jacobites had had enough of him, and even Atterbury attested his dissatisfaction with so changeable and unreliable a supporter.

But if he could no longer be an adviser of an exiled King or the intimate of an exiled Bishop he could at least become friendly with an exiled newspaper proprietor of doubtful antecedents but of not at all doubtful disloyalty, and we hear of him consorting with the notorious Mist, whose *Weekly Journal* had been a recognised Jacobite organ, and

was then published in Paris although its proprietor was living at Rouen. In the August the 24th issue of this precious news-sheet there appeared, under the signature of "Amos Dudge," a virulent attack on the King and his Prime Minister. In this George II. figures as Esreff and Walpole as the Chief Scribe, and under guise of an account of things that are supposed to have happened in Persia, Wharton (the real author) gives vent to his passion, his prejudice, and his poltroonery. If there is anything in the Duke's character which his apologists (in the unlikely event of his ever having any) will find it hard to defend, it is this bitter, stupid piece of anonymous invective which he launched at the two men who had shown such forbearance with his treason and such willingness to forgive his innumerable acts of treachery and double dealing.

The British Government thought thus, and, at last, determined to make an example of the Duke, outlawed him. It appeared subsequently that there had been some technical errors in this procedure, and the sentence was subsequently reversed, but as by that time Wharton was dead it was rather late in the day to correct the mistake. In any case there is no doubt that Wharton richly deserved what he got. His astonishment was unbounded when he at last realised what his mal-practices had brought upon him ; he was still more concerned when he learned that in consequence of

the writ of outlawry his estates were confiscated and his trustees forbidden to send him any money for himself or even what had been settled as pin-money on his Duchess.

Here then he found himself at Rouen with a large household, clamorous tradespeople, ever-increasing expenses, with the sum of £600 and with no apparent source from which to obtain any more. The difficulty of getting him to realise the seriousness of his position is indicated by a passage in his *Memoirs*: "The Duke," writes the author of this account of his life, "had about two quarters of his annuity in hand, the half of £1200, when he fixed upon Rouen for his residence, where more of his servants joined him from Spain. Here he formed his household and made a calculation in which there appeared to be but one mistake: that his Grace proportioned his disbursements not according to the extent of his fortune but agreeable to the size of his quality; and though no pains were wanting to set the Duke right in an affair that so much concerned him, yet it proved too difficult an undertaking to convince him of this error in his reckoning so long as he could tell ten, nay, so long as he had one crown left."

It is obvious that the news of the Duke's outlawry would not be long in reaching Rouen. Its effect when it was known was for him disastrous. Tradespeople of all sorts, who had been ready

enough to allow credit to the Duke with that pleasing optimism which among such people a title begets, at last realised that all the return they were likely to obtain was the dubious honour of having served his Grace of Wharton, and from being over-patient they began to wax over-clamorous. The Duke's rooms were filled with the threats and ex-postulations of those who demanded payment for all sorts of things, from horses and carriages to the ordinary necessities of everyday life. Nor Sheridan nor Fox could ever have been put to greater straits to invent excuses in order to pacify commercial fury. The egregious Duke seems to have taken the whole thing with the same light-hearted *insouciance* with which he had changed political sides and dabbled with *lèse-majesté*. "The poverty of his circumstances," says his first biographer, "proved a fund of inexhaustible humour : an empty bottle was the subject of many a dry joke, and the want of a dinner seemed to whet more his wit than his appetite." For indeed it came at last to this, that the worthy shopkeepers of Rouen, finding they could not get their arrears paid, determined to allow the Duke no more credit, and there seems no reason why he and his Duchess and his household (in his humorous reception of poverty he does not appear to have considered what these thought about the matter—the usual selfish attitude of the Skimpoles of this world) should not actually have starved. He had, however, made

numerous friends in Rouen—a Duke can always do so, even a silly fool of a Duke—and there is no doubt that he made them pay for what they probably thought the honour of his acquaintance. There is a story, too, that the Royal exile sent him a sum of money, and later his sister no doubt helped him. But such assistance was as a drop in the very large bucket of his extravagance. And at last things came to such a pass that, as the saying is, Rouen became too hot for him, and one night he levanted with his sorely-tried Duchess to Paris.

In Paris, as may be imagined, Wharton continued his career of folly and recklessness. In one instance, however, one can accuse him of neither, if we are to believe his own account of the matter, which there seems no reason to doubt. A certain Lord C—, a Scottish peer who had been intimate with the Whartons in Italy and had renewed it in Paris, boasted that he was *au mieux*, as they say, with the Duchess of Wharton. The Duke sent him a challenge to meet with pistols at Valenciennes, and affirms that he actually went there to await Lord C.'s arrival. It seems, however, that the latter was arrested in Paris and was unable to keep the appointment. How it became known to the authorities that a meeting was in contemplation is not clear. The Duke's enemies hinted that he had himself given due notice of the affair in order to avoid a meeting. Wharton has

been accused of cowardice and, as we know, the sight of a drawn sword was curiously repugnant to him. But we have so few good traits to record of his general conduct that I think in this particular case we may give him the benefit of the doubt, and it is at least pleasant to know that he stated in so many words that he had not the least suspicion of the Duchess's conduct and honour. He certainly could not have said less, but rakes and ne'er-do-wells do not generally do or say what they ought to. Perhaps the most amazing part of the letter in which the Duke's version of this affair is given by one of his friends at his desire, is the concluding paragraph, which runs thus : " My Lord Duke is now in a religious retreat in a convent, to make his Easter. If this works in him a reformation, as may reasonably be expected, he may yet be a comfort to himself and his friends, which I hope and sincerely wish for." ¹

Before trying this novel form of experience (at least one hopes it was before) the Duke continued to act in Paris with the same irresponsibility as had characterised his conduct throughout his earlier career. We hear of his giving a magnificent ball at St. Germains and generally acting in a way rather suitable to his position than his purse, although he was not above doing things for which his peculiar ideas of honour did not apparently make him blush. Thus on one occasion, having

¹The letter is given in the *Memoirs of Philip, Duke of Wharton.*

been invited by a Portuguese nobleman to a festival in honour of King Dionysius, the founder of the Order of Christ, he accepted, but remarked that he did not know what costume would be *de rigueur*. "A black velvet suit would be most appropriate," replied the Portuguese. "But," said Wharton, "I have no suit of that kind, nor do I know from what tailor I could obtain one." "That is easily arranged, I will send my own tailor to you," was the reply. The Duke thanked his friend; the tailor arrived; the suit was duly made and delivered, and his Grace appeared at the ceremony. Shortly afterwards the tailor sent in his bill. "What is this for?" asked Wharton. "For the black velvet suit I supplied to your Grace." "My dear sir," retorted the Duke, "there is some mistake. You must get Signor — to pay this, for you must understand that when I put on another man's livery I expect him to pay for the clothes."

As a companion story of ducal impudence (to call it by no worse a name) may be recorded the following, which the assiduous author of the before-quoted *Memoirs* gives at some length, but which I will abridge as far as possible:

Wharton had become acquainted at St. Germain's with a rich and amenable young Irish peer—a certain Lord M—. One night he drove up to this young gentleman's hotel in Paris and told him that he was engaged on a very important affair,

and for that purpose begged the loan for a few hours of his coach and lackeys. "By all means," said his good-natured friend. When all was in readiness the Duke said: "Now I have another favour to ask: will you accompany me?" The young peer expressed his willingness and away they drove. The first business proved to be the driving round Paris and knocking up a number of musicians attached to the Opera who, it being late, were mostly found in bed. Liberal promises, however, drew them from their slumbers, and they were soon all crowded into the coach, which at the Duke's directions set off for St. Germains. Arrived there the musicians were ordered to descend and assemble beneath the window of a certain house and forthwith to serenade some young ladies with whom it appeared the Duke had been for some time carrying on a violent flirtation. That was that; and as the morning was yet young (it was about five o'clock) it then entered the Duke's brain that it would be a good opportunity to awaken, if not exactly serenade, a friend of his living at Poissy. So off to Poissy they went after having, with no little difficulty, added to the band a couple of trumpets and a kettledrum. The astonished friend was duly roused from his slumbers, and anxious not to appear churlish had the whole party into his house and regaled them so satisfactorily that they all left in due course in a state of high satisfaction with themselves and each

other. Arrived back in Paris the question arose as to the payment of the musicians. "My dear M——," coolly remarked Wharton, "I have not a single franc. Will you pay, and if ever I have the opportunity I will settle with you." Needs must when such a Duke drives a coach full of fiddlers, and Lord M—— had to discharge the reckoning with what grace he could. Evidently my Lord Duke was of that tribe who never grow old—or sensible!

However, as I have said, he presently withdrew to a monastery and actually for a time impressed the good fathers with his exemplary conduct, attending to all the duties imposed on him and occupying his leisure over an English version of Telemachus, the ghost of whose author must have wondered considerably at such a translator.

Such simple pleasures, which may for a few weeks have titillated the jaded sensations of the Duke, were not, however, destined to be of long duration. How could they be? He was becoming more and more of a drunkard and was slowly but surely degenerating into a wretched remnant of his once brilliant (though always wayward and rudderless) self. Even his friendly biographer is forced to admit so much, and he tells us how having left the shelter of the pious fathers, the Duke "tumbled again into the world and ran headlong into a round of vice, folly, and extravagance as bad as ever he had been accustomed to." From

the same source we learn that he became undignified in his behaviour, and he had hitherto prided himself on his dignity, and debauched in his appearance, and he had been a handsome fellow even down to so little a time before ; his voice, too, had become loud and dissonant. But even in the eclipse he would occasionally take on something of his former bearing ; his eye would brighten, the colour return to his pallid cheek, and something of the old Wharton of the days when he had defended Atterbury and flouted Walpole would return, quickly to be obliterated by some drunken orgy or by even some more disreputable excess.

How he managed to live is something of a mystery. Like another notable exile, Brummell, he existed perilously, it would appear, on the intermittent assistance of good-natured friends. At last this source of precarious livelihood dried up, and we are told that the week before he left Paris Wharton was actually so reduced as not to possess a single coin and was obliged to beg a lodging for his Duchess and himself from various friends, during all of which time he was dodging his numerous creditors. One of these friends, who records this sad state of affairs in a letter dated June 1st, 1729, tells how he (the writer) rushed all over Paris to try to raise funds and had to go to St. Germains to procure necessary clothes and linen. “ I brought him,” he says, “ one shirt and a cravat, with which,

with 500 livres,¹ his whole stock, he and his Duchess, attended by one servant, set out for Spain ; ” and he adds : “ All the news I have heard of them since is that a day or two after he sent for Captain Brierly and two or three of his domestics to follow him, but none but the Captain obeyed the summons. Where they are now I can’t tell, but fear they must be in great distress by this time, if he has had no other supplies ; and so ends my melancholy story.”

The fugitives, for they were really nothing less, made for Orleans and thence travelled to Nantes. Here the Duke received some money from a friend which enabled them to take ship for Bilbao. Arrived there, although again in the direst straits for money, the volatile wanderer had it in his heart to write “ a humorous letter ” to a friend in which the journey’s *désagrémens* are amusingly set forth, and an apt quotation from Dryden introduced.

Wharton now bethought him of the one means by which he could at least earn a little money, and that was to take up his duties with the Spanish regiment, then stationed at Lerida, of which he had been made a Colonel and whose existence he seems hitherto to have forgotten. Accordingly he left Bilbao to join it, while his Duchess, accompanied by the Duke of Ormonde, who happened to be at Bilbao at the moment, made her way to her mother in Madrid, and thus, although she lived

¹ i.e. francs.

with nearly half a century of sad reflections before her, passes out of our story.¹

Thus we find his Grace the Duke of Wharton, K.G., the once owner of vast estates and a great name, reduced to such a pass as to have come to rely for his subsistence on the exiguous pay of a Spanish Colonel, a pay variously returned at from £88 to £192 a year.² He had exhausted the purses and the patience of his friends, and if he did receive any addition to this meagre allowance it was from his sister, Lady Jane Holt,³ who in spite of his vagaries continued on affectionate terms with him and did what she could to assist him. On one occasion when his regiment was about to go on active service he had not the wherewithal to provide himself with the necessary equipment, and it was apparently Lady Jane who sent him the money requisite for that purpose. From a passage in a letter written by Wharton to a friend in England at this time (May 1730), he speaks with characteristic enthusiasm of the coming campaign : " We are preparing with great alacrity for a red-hot war ; " and he adds that the Inspector-General is

¹ She is said once again to have entered the Spanish Royal Household ; eventually she came to England, and apparently enjoyed more prosperous days than she had known with her amazing Duke. She died in 1777 in a house in Golden Square.

² Say from £350 to £750 at present-day values.

³ On the death of her first husband, Mr. John Holt, she married in 1733 Mr. Robert Coke of Longford, brother of Coke of Norfolk, the 1st Earl of Leicester.

to review the troops in a short time : " He is to pass my regiment the 23rd of this month, and I am preparing for his reception. I will show him two battalions that are as fine as any troops in Europe."

The fact is the effect of poverty and the impossibility of sponging on acquaintances or in deluding too confiding tradespeople was having a most salutary bearing on Wharton's character, and it is probable that at no period of his life did he live more regularly and decently than when he was attached to the army of a country at war with his own. This anomaly is characteristic of his temperament, but at any rate it enabled him to make a better exit from this world than his previous habits might have seemed to promise.

For indeed he was drawing to the close of his complex career. His constitution had been consistently assailed by dissipation. Two years earlier he had been at death's door, but had almost miraculously recovered. It was, however, but a respite ; and when in 1731 he was again attacked by a mysterious malady he became so reduced in strength as to make it almost impossible for him to walk across his bedroom. For two months he remained in this enervated state, and it was then determined to move him to the Catalonian hills, where it was thought the mineral waters of the district might have a beneficial effect. So indeed for a time they had, and after a period he was

sufficiently recovered to join his regiment, which had by that time gone to Tarragona. He had, however, not been there long before he again became seriously ill and was obliged once more to have recourse to the medicinal springs. He was on his way thither when his condition became suddenly so alarming that he was forced to stop at a small village which apparently possessed no better accommodation than was to be found in the small cottages of which it was composed. Into one of these he was carried, and there for a time he lay with only the ordinary attentions that the poor ignorant owners could give him. There was in the vicinity, however, at a place called Poblet, a Franciscan monastery, and the good fathers hearing that a stranger was lying ill in one of the humble dwellings of the village, immediately came to his assistance, and had him removed to their charitable care. But the Duke of Wharton was past human aid. The sedulous attentions of the monks could but soothe his last hours, and after lingering on in a comatose condition for six days he died so destitute that he drew his last breath¹ (on May 31st, 1731) dressed in one of the monk's gowns and so friendless that his fading vision saw around him only strangers.

On the following day his body was laid in the graveyard attached to the monastery, and his

¹ Walpole says he had an account of Wharton's death from a certain Captain Willoughby, who was in the convent at the time.

name and empty titles were inscribed on a stone in the floor of the chapel. The exile lay at peace at last amid the mountains of an alien land, and in those remote fastnesses found a haven,

“Where danger, death, and shame assault no more.”

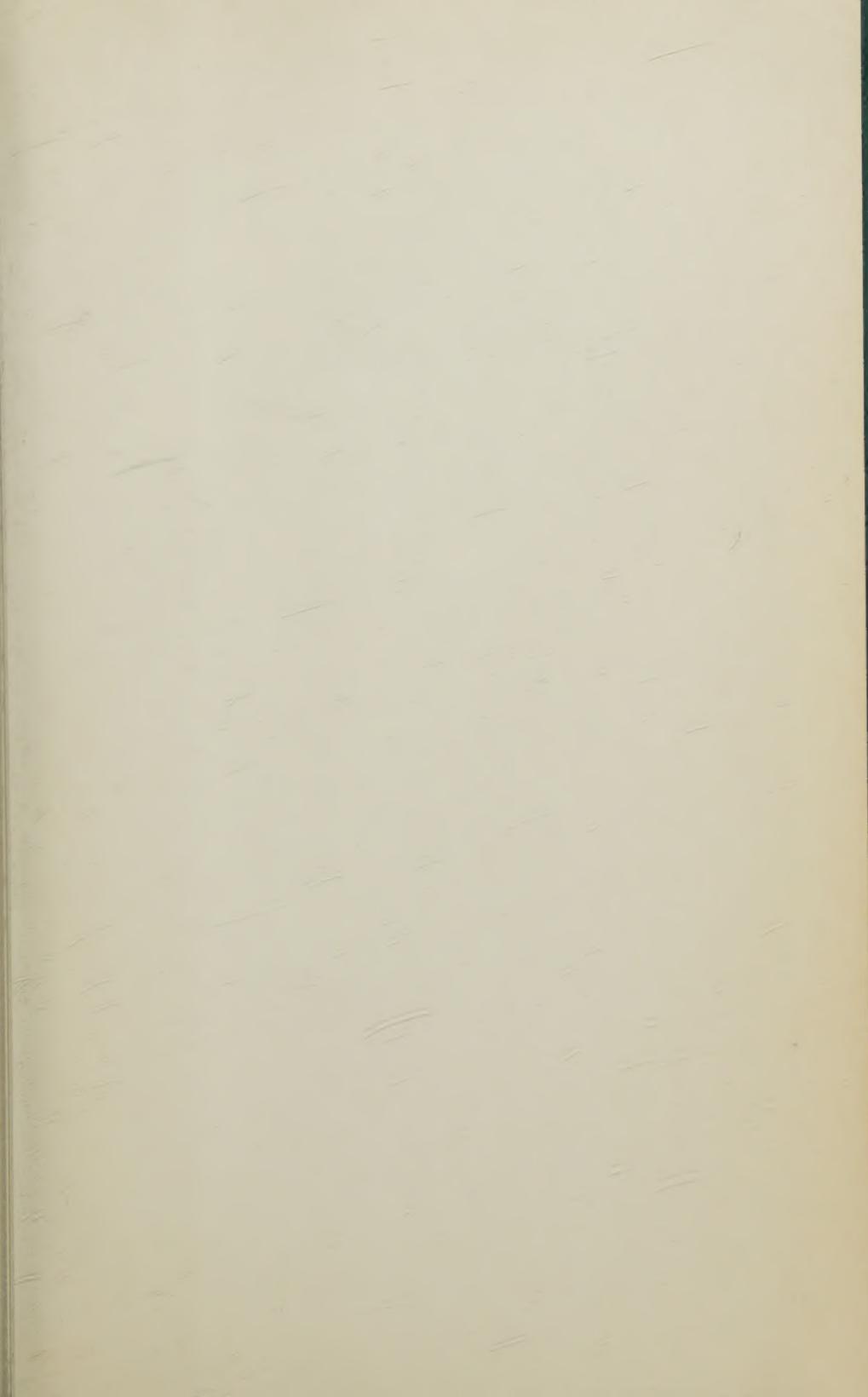
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Between Philip, Duke of Wharton, a type of the eighteenth-century rake, and George, Duke of Buckingham, a type of the *genus* of the seventeenth century, there is much in common. Both were born to positions which promised all that man can desire. Both were singularly endowed with personal attractions and brilliant capabilities. Both possessed great wealth and could boast of “honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.” And both forfeited all. Wharton and Buckingham were each the victim of some curious twist in the character which nullified all the great gifts with which Nature had blessed them, and which in their regardless hands became as the crackling of thorns under the pots ; each was disloyal to his king ; each was unfaithful to his wife ; each was implacable in his enmity and uncertain in his friendship ; each dissipated his fortune, and over the death-bed of each hung a soiled and dishonoured coronet.

The lives of both were fitted to adorn a tale and point a moral, and the moralist will be quick to seize on them as apt subjects for a tract. And truth to tell, as the idle apprentices of high life they

offer themselves as appropriate subjects. Here we are not concerned in such an exposition. Rather is it attempted to show to what vagaries and excesses the complexities of human nature will lead their victims (for the tolerant will really regard them as such), and if excuses can be found, to find them in those manifold temptations which those who are not exposed to them are apt to suppose easily withstood. It is a daring thing to judge human frailty—there are often so many hidden causes for what seems to ordinary people mere waywardness and inherent vice. But as we stand by the forgotten graves of such men, we may at least regret lost advantages, misused gifts, and wonder how they could let time wash off “the double gilt” of what should have been splendid and fruitful lives.¹

¹ Wharton possessed among other property a residence, “a most sumptuous building, finely finished and furnished,” in Dover Street, Piccadilly. What remained of his estate appears to have been administered by his sister, Lady Jane Coke, but it was long before it was all cleared up, and we find only in 1752 Lady Jane hoping that during the winter of that year her brother’s affairs may be finally settled.



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